

FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

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OCTOBER

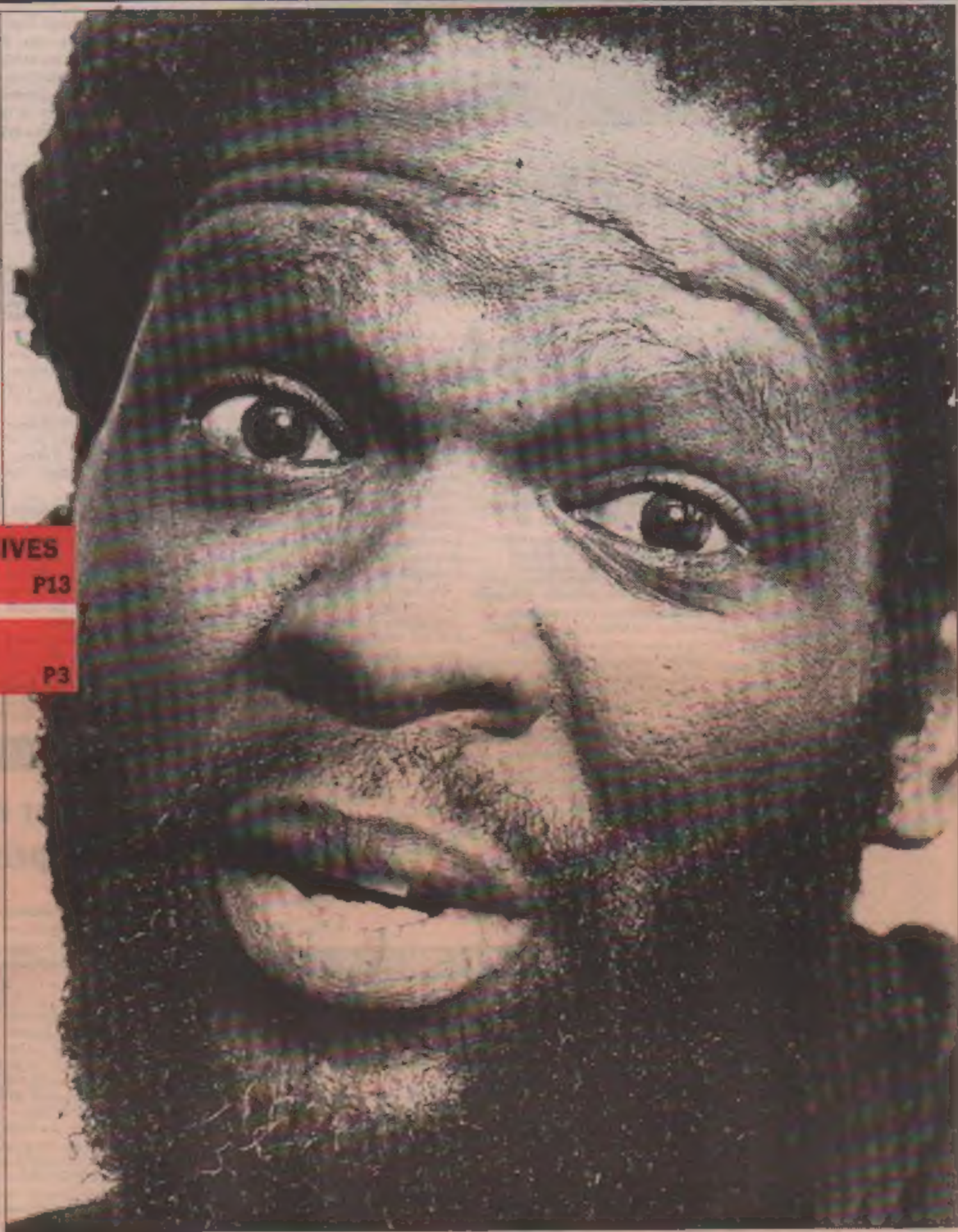
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Shotts prison protest

Paramilitary raid ends Peterhead prison protest

The paramilitary raid that ended the Peterhead prison protest at 5.15am Saturday 3 October signalled a new determination by the government to crack down hard on prison protests. The 165 hour siege at Peterhead followed on the heels of the protest at Shotts. On Sunday 4 October Perth prison erupted and a prison officer was taken hostage.

Shotts is the 'showpiece' of the Scottish prisons. It is said to have better conditions and facilities. But on 27 and 28 September 108 prisoners in C Hall held a prison officer hostage for over 24 hours.

The protest was sparked off when John Gallagher was transferred to the notorious Inverness cages. John Gallagher took part to the Peterhead rooftop protest last year and later went on a 40 day hunger strike in Barlinnie. Gallagher's initial move to Shotts was given much press attention as evidence of a commitment to reform. Gallagher's subsequent move to the most brutal prison regime, the Inverness cages, exposes this as blatant propaganda.

Shotts' prisoners were rightly outraged at Gallagher's treatment. They hung banners out of the windows saying 'The department pulled a stroke on Gallagher' and 'Abemethy (the Governor) we have had enough

of your system'. The protest followed two fires just the day before.

The very day that the Shotts' protest ended, 146 prisoners at Peterhead prison took two prison officers hostage in D Hall. This latest protest took place on the eve of a visit to the jail by Rifkind. Prisoners took to the roof, unfurling banners saying 'Brutality island' and 'Why have Barlinnie thugs in uniform not been charged with the torture of Sammy Ralston?' Sammy Ralston is one of the prisoners in the protest.

One of the prison officers was released after one night, and prisoners handed over a list of complaints to a reporter. The prisoners want changes in the parole system and an investigation into injuries inflicted on prisoners. They also complained about the use of solitary confinement.

After the release of the prison offi-

cer only three prisoners remained involved in the protest. In the early hours of Saturday 3 October their protest was broken by an operation which, according to the Glasgow Evening Times, '... had all the hallmarks of the SAS from the use of stun grenades to the blacked figure seen abseiling down the walls of D Hall at the height of the raid'.

The raid began with a shout of 'Let's go' followed by a loud explosion, plumes of black smoke from D Hall and the sharp crack of tear gas grenades. This is the first ever use of stun grenades and tear gas in a prison protest. The government's actions bring closer the day when a prisoner will die in such a protest.

The protests at Shotts and Peterhead have ripped through the government's attempts to cover up the Scottish prison system. The brutal attack on the Peterhead prisoners shows that the 'velvet glove' is only for the more gullible elements of the media; for the prisoners the iron fist rules. Meanwhile C Hall Perth is wrecked and police wait on the roof, ready to launch an attack.

Graham Johnson

PRISON STORM OVER EXTRADITION

Special treatment for football thugs in Belgium

The week beginning 7 September saw massive protests by prisoners in at least two Belgian prisons. At St Gilles jail, prisoners set up barricades, lit fires and got onto the roof for three hours before hundreds of riot police stormed in with tear gas to crush the protest. Over 100 prisoners were injured and another 30 were taken to hospital for treatment. At Forest prison on 6 September, £20,000 of damage was done.

The catalyst for these protests was TV and newspaper reports of the reformed conditions for 26 Liverpool football fans at Louvain prison. They are awaiting their trial for the manslaughter of 39 Italian 'Juventus' supporters at Heysel stadium in 1985. The self-contained 14 cell remand wing where they are being held is the only up-dated section of the 120 year old prison. The Liverpool fans have access to a 21 seat TV room, games room with chess, backgammon and table football. They have exercise periods twice a day for one hour and access to visits from relatives and friends.

Like British jails, overcrowding, disgusting conditions, little or no exercise, long periods on remand are

the order of the day in Belgium. Falling over themselves to assure the British government that the 26 will not suffer likewise, the Belgian authorities have invited British journalists to inspect the new remand wing.

Even so, there have been outcries in the British media about the fate of the 26. Sir Harry Livermore, lawyer to 11 of the fans, added his nationalistic pennyworth, 'if this is happening before they get to Belgium, what on earth will happen when the 26 get to Louvain prison?'. Don't worry Sir Harry, they will be well protected by Belgian riot police.

Alex Byrne

PTA ARRESTS

Press finds Irish guilty before trial

When the news broke on 1 September that the Wiltshire police had arrested two people in the grounds of the Northern Ireland Secretary's house and were holding them under the PTA, the British press got busy. When detectives arrested a third man at a campsite and it became known that they were Irish, the press knew it was in for a field day. The treatment of the three, Martin Shanahan, John McCann and Finbar Cullen is typical of the injustice that automatically faces Irish people.

Lurid stories of 'IRA assassins' filled the tabloids. And the so-called quality press was no better. For nearly a week they produced stories that were essentially police press hand-outs.

'West Country detectives holding three people suspected of plotting to assassinate ... Mr Tom King, believe they were from an IRA gang.' *Daily Telegraph*

'Police believe they may have thwarted the planning for an assassination attempt on ... Tom King ...' *The Guardian*

'Special Branch detectives believe that the three accused are part of an IRA active service unit operating on the British mainland'. *The Observer*

Reports also contained unsubstantiated accusations, for example that traces of explosives had been found on one man. These reports clearly came directly from the police. Coupled with this went the usual panic about security at the Blackpool venue of the Tory Conference.

The enthusiasm of the police to use the press as judge and jury, may well have indicated their problem in finding concrete evidence. The three were held for the full seven days permitted under the PTA. Finally they

were charged with conspiracy to murder. This charge has enormous advantages for the police and is often used for Irish people against whom there is no evidence whatsoever. 'Conspiracy' requires no hard evidence and relies instead on irrelevant material such as the political views of the accused.

But the police did not stop there. They used the first court appearance of the three as part of the process of establishing their guilt in the public mind. The case was held not in the courtroom, which was vetoed for 'security reasons', but in the police station itself. Police marksmen were on the roofs and a helicopter hovered overhead. All people going into court were body searched and checked with a metal detector. The defence request that the names of the three be kept private on the grounds that press speculation had led to potential attacks on themselves and their families was refused.

Following all this there can be no possibility of the three receiving an unprejudiced trial. Thirteen years after a similar scenario put the Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four in jail, three more Irish people are being railroaded into prison by the police and the press.

Maxine Williams

PRISONERS FIGHT BACK

'Behaviour modification' means prison torture

Disturbing information relating to the situation of prisoner Joe Vratsides continues to circulate throughout the long-term prison system.

Vratsides (Joe the Greek), a lifer, was convicted at Bristol crown court earlier this year for allegedly assaulting Bristol prison officer, Allan Pugh, during an incident at the prison when Vratsides himself was attacked and beaten up by senior officer Pugh and a gang of his cohorts. Vratsides was at the time on a 10/74 'lay-down' because of his so-called 'subversive behaviour' at Long Lartin. Sentenced to an additional three years for his alleged assault on Pugh, Vratsides has since been held in conditions of total solitary confinement and moved regularly from prison to prison.

He has also been frequently beaten-up and physically maltreated, held for long periods of time in 'body restraints', or 'body belts' and regularly held for days at a time in sensory deprivation strong-boxes.

Recent information confirms that he sustained a broken foot when beaten up by prison officers at Durham prison recently. He remains at that prison inside a cage-cell situated in the prison's segregation/punishment block.

There are close similarities in the system's treatment of Vratsides with that inflicted upon George Wilkinson who died at Liverpool prison in 1979. Before his death, Wilkinson had been systematically brutalised and dehumanised to the point of eventual physical destruction. The prison department have a euphemism for it: 'behaviour modifi-

cation for trouble-makers'. Joe Vratsides is presently in an extremely vulnerable situation, and one that demands immediate exposure, both as a means of, we hope, protecting his life, and highlighting the methods employed by the prison system against prisoners who demand too strongly or openly to be treated as human beings.

John Bowden
HMP Long Lartin



Imbert's right to silence

On 15 September, speaking to the International Police Exhibition and Conference, Metropolitan Police Commissioner Peter Imbert declared that the right of suspects not to answer questions was a 'privilege against self-incrimination'.

He told the assembled top cops that the abolition of this right would be 'the most important step legislators could take to control and reduce crime.' Manchester's deranged Chief Constable, James Anderson, as usual went further. Suspects should be 'morally and legally bound' (and, no doubt, physically bound) to give any information the police want.

Imbert's remarks come after Home Secretary Douglas Hurd's own suggestion that the right to silence should be 'reconsidered'. We are witnessing a carefully mounted campaign to allow the government to slip the abolition of this right into the soon to be reintroduced Criminal Justice Bill. Imbert is an appropriate cheerleader for this campaign.

It was Imbert who helped to interrogate, frame, the Guildford Four. It was Imbert who exercised his own 'right to silence' when he tried to cover up the fact that three of the Balcombe Street IRA Active Service Unit told him that they had carried out the Guildford and Woolwich bombings.

It is to make such frame ups easier that the right to silence is under attack. And it is to make such frame ups harder that we have to defend the right not to answer police questions.

HATTERSLEY BACKS COPS

Speaking at the end of a visit to three police stations in West Yorkshire on 18 September, Roy Hattersley, Labour Party shadow Home Secretary, called for closer relations between the Labour Party and the police.

He attacked the 'tiny minority in the Labour Party' who made irresponsible attacks on the police. He promised that he would have no truck with such attacks. This public grovelling came just three days after Imbert's attack on the right to silence and one day after Mad Anderson's call for castration of sex offenders.

Terry O'Halloran

Moss Side police take a beating

On Sunday 27 September, 11 police were injured and 9 police vehicles were damaged in a clash with the local black working class community. The incident developed following a police car chase which ended up near Moss Side's 8411 Centre in Manchester. The police succeeded in arresting two of the four youths in an allegedly stolen car. Meanwhile having made their escape, the other two youths alerted people in the centre who rushed out and began stoning the police. After some fierce fighting they successfully freed their two comrades. Speaking to FRFI later a local man said:

'The police and government are racist. They won't take any notice of our cries for justice and its causing people to take the law into their own hands. In the same way, the Irish people aren't going to give up.'

PRISONERS FUND

'Thank you for sending the paper over the past few years. I have really enjoyed reading it and will endeavour to obtain copies after I am released.'

(Neil Harrison, August 1987 before his release)

Each month it costs £68 to send our newspaper into prisoners. We are re-launching our prisoners fund to help meet rising costs. A subscription for a prisoner costs £7.50 and prisoners cannot afford to pay this. We are appealing to our readers to take out a subscription to our *Prisoners Fund* (please send for a standing order form)

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LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE • BRIGHTON 1987

In the wilderness

This year's Labour Party conference saw the consolidation of Kinnock's control, an acceleration of the move to the right, and the increased isolation of the left.

In all the main debates Kinnock, backed by the block vote, won. Re-election by all constituency members and local trade unions in electoral colleges was carried by 4,545,000 votes to 1,608,000. This so-called 'widening of the franchise' simply ensures that Kinnock and the trade union leaders will have complete control over the choice of parliamentary candidates.

The policy review was carried overwhelmingly. Kinnock now has a free hand to construct a set of policies fit for the labour aristocracy: wider share ownership, no nationalisation; scrapping of non-nuclear defence policy; no taxing of the rich; support for 'law and order'; no reds; no blacks; no gays; no women.

On defence, Trident should be used 'politically' to demand a Soviet response (John Riddock MP erstwhile CND leader). Kinnock told journalists that Labour needed a defence policy to meet the 'conditions of the 1990s'. The conference voted to 'review' the 'timetable' and 'negotiating strategy' of Labour's non-nuclear defence policy.

Only Arthur Scargill in the debate on Thursday 1 October, declared unqualified support for unilateral nuclear disarmament and added that the money saved should not go to conventional weapons but to hospitals, schools and homes.

On Wednesday 30 September the NUM motion calling for renationalisation of privatised industries was defeated by 3,869,000 votes to 2,397,000. Alan Tuffin, UCU, said that such a policy would be 'unimaginative and unpopular'. In the debate Bryan Gould, newly-elected to the NEC and Kinnock's right-hand man,

talked of using share-ownership as an 'instrument to hand real power to working people'.

The conference backed the 'reorganisation' of Labour Party Young Socialists - ie decided to wrest control of LPYS from Militant and hand it over to the party leadership. Felicity Dowling was the last of the Liverpool militants to be expelled. Compulsory redundancies for workers at Labour Party HQ were agreed.

Black sections were once again massively rejected. Ireland was not discussed. Race and immigration were not discussed - except for the emergency motion on Viraj Mendis. This is not surprising. The conference was aimed solely at the better off workers and the middle class.

Kinnock's keynote speech, which contained not one specific statement of policy, was quite clear that nothing will be allowed to stand in the way of his lust for power. He is after the vote of the £400 a week dockers with some

shares, a house, a car and property in Marbella. The 16 million living on and below the poverty line will not be allowed to interfere with this.

His warning could not be clearer. He called for:

... the self-discipline of ensuring that every word, every deed and every statement and action is related completely to the attainment of victory.

What's left of the left will now come under the hammer even more than before.

The hands down victory of the right at the Labour Party conference followed the equally decisive victory at the TUC a few weeks earlier. There the assembled brothers, with a handful of sisters, voted against opposing no strike deals and for its own version of the Labour Party's 'review'.

The defeat of the left

The left lost on every major issue. The isolation of the left is growing. One by one the 'hard' left heroes move either into the Kinnock camp or into obscurity.

At the Campaign meeting on Saturday 26 September Audrey Wise, who lost her NEC seat two days later, declared that Labour must cater for the 'have somes' and not just the 'have nots'. (When, by the way, did Labour last cater for the have nots?)

Tony Benn's warning - 'If we forget internationalism we become a "parochial group of power seekers" ... We are debating "glasnost" in a private session on Tuesday' - and Dennis Skinner's sharp and hilarious attacks on the leadership are cries in the wilderness. They cannot stand against the arithmetic of power.

If Labour is to win an election in present conditions it has to win the votes of the privileged and that means abandoning in words and deeds the interests of the mass of the working class and oppressed.

Where do we go from here?

The one significant victory scored by the left points the way to the future. The conference agenda excluded all discussion of immigration. Black section activists, Labour left-wingers joined forces with RCG comrades and the VMDC to force the Standing Orders Committee to put an emergency resolution in support of Viraj Mendis back onto the agenda.

At a packed fringe meeting on Monday 28 September the plan of action was mapped out: a lobby of the SOC followed by daily harassment coupled with, if necessary, disruption of the conference. These tactics forced the SOC to concede. On Friday 2 October the conference, so tightly controlled by the right, voted unanimously to support a black communist against deportation (see report this issue).

This victory contains a lesson for the Labour left. If they want to avoid complete irrelevance they have to reach outside of the Labour Party to the forces which are emerging outside the traditional labour movement. They have to unite with the most oppressed sections of the working class, with the fighting campaigns that are not under the grip of the Labour Party. This is the only way to mount an effective challenge to the corrupt opportunist leadership of the labour movement. Kinnockism will be defeated outside, not inside, the Labour Party.

Terry O'Halloran

LET THEM EAT CAKE

'There's something special for wine enthusiasts too. The new range of wines, selected especially for the Labour Party, will be available for tasting.

There's a Muscadet - "its petillance or subtle fizz is a delight"; a "superb" red Cabernet; and an "unusual" Rosé from a Spanish wine co-operative in Aragón which is described as "a real treat".

(from Labour Party Conference Guide)

Tories attack lowest paid and unemployed

While the media faithfully followed Thatcher on her sanitised, sight-seeing tour of Britain's inner-cities, the Tory Government busied itself with preparing a legislative programme that will remove any remaining 'legal rigidities' that disrupt driving down the living standards of the low paid and the unemployed even further.

The Wages Act 1987 meant that:

'half a million young workers, aged under 21, were removed from the protection of wages councils. In addition, adult workers have, over the course of the last 12 months, lost statutory legal rights to minimum paid annual holiday, extra pay for shift patterns and unsocial hours ...' (Low Pay Review 30)

It is now clear that this is just the tip of the iceberg. Government controlled Wages Councils set the minimum pay rates for around 2.25 million workers in the lowest paid jobs in the country. Yet figures published recently by the Low Pay Unit show that workers being paid the Government's 'legal' rates are in fact worse off than a single person on Supplementary Benefit. A gross hourly rate of £2.27, for a 39 hour week, is needed to produce a net income equivalent to Supplementary Benefit. All of the Government's 'legal' pay rates fall below this. The highest hourly rate is £2.20 for workers in non-food shops. The lowest rates are in hairdressing, where the adult minimum starts at just £1.33 per hour - a wage equivalent that is 41.5 per cent below the Supplementary Benefit level.

WAGES DEBT

Despite the 'legal' poverty level of

Wages Council rates, every year thousands of employers are discovered to be 'illegally' paying workers below even this putative.

'Across Great Britain as a whole employers in one in three (33.7%) of workplaces visited were underpaying. More than one in ten (11.1%) of the workers in these firms were paid below the minimum rate.' (Ibid, p7).

In the North 48.5% of employers who were visited were found paying below the 'legal' poverty level to an average of 21.2% of the workers employed there, producing an illegal 'wage debt' of £2.25 million. Out of a total of 8,206 employers found to be 'illegally' underpaying workers, the Tories turned a blind eye to 8,204 of them. Only two were prosecuted. They were fined a mere £400 and £1000 respectively.

LOW PAID

The Local Government Bill will further the attack on already low paid workers. The Bill will force local authorities to put specified services out to tender, prohibiting them from imposing 'non-commercial' conditions on contractors, such as minimum wage levels, conditions of employment and equal opportunity

clauses. As a Treasury study itself concluded:

'Most of the savings from contracting out arise because contractors offer poorer conditions of employment. Contractors ... offer similar basic rates of pay ranging from 10 per cent less ... provide little if any sick pay, and avoid national insurance payments by means of more part-time working.' (HM Treasury, *Using Private Enterprise in Government*, HMSO 1986).

Low paid workers will face even more pay cuts, driving down their wages so low that they are excluded from such 'luxuries' as sick pay or unemployment benefit. In effect low paid jobs will fall to the lowest bidder.

NO RIGHTS FOR THE POOR

The Government White Paper, *Building Business Not Barriers*, will remove all basic employment rights for everyone working under twenty hours a week - rights such as redundancy or maternity pay, time off for trade union activities, or to claim unfair dismissal will become fading memories.

While low paid workers are left to fend for themselves against the ravages of a increasingly desperate 'free economy', the unemployed are to be treated like a ready supply of slave labour or as 'potential criminals'. In August, Norman Fowler, the Employment Secretary, announced that from 26 October, job centres and unemployment benefit services would be 'merged', making it administratively easier to deny benefits to those who refuse to go on Government training schemes. (The Guardian, 1 August).

While cutting the number of wage inspectors from 117 to 71, the Tories increased the number of social security 'fraud inspectors' by a

massive 20 per cent to 3,000. Last month the Government revealed the new 'increased professionalism' of the fraud staff - in effect an expanded and reorganised intelligence gathering unit designed to police the ranks of the low paid and the unemployed in order to catch anyone found 'abusing the system'.

The Department of Employment admitted that last year they launched a highly organised surveillance and intelligence gathering operation in central London in order to 'catch' benefit riders that were claiming benefits while at work. The Government operated two levels of intelligence gathering, the first was to obtain the names and addresses on the employers' wage records and then to cross check them with the unemployed register. The second method involved recording all the registrations of dispatch riders' motorbikes seen in central London, then to use the registration numbers to obtain the names and addresses of the owners, and to finally cross check all the information with the unemployed register.

These revelations come with the Tories' adoption of a new 'higher profile' approach, announcing that the next area on their list is the cab drivers and the 948 catering staff that work at Heathrow Airport. Threatening claimants with either a £2,000 fine or three months imprisonment, it is not surprising that the amount of unclaimed benefits is increasing. As John Lee, the Junior Employment Minister gloated, 'The campaign was having an impact. Last year, 60,000 people stopped claiming.' (The Guardian, 16 September).

Nick Lewis

Sources: Low Pay Review 30, Low Pay Unit, 9 Upper Berkeley Street, London W1R 8BY, price £2 including p&p. The Tender Trap. Low Pay Unit (see above).



HOUSING CUTS

CAMDEN PICKET OF LABOUR MEETING

On Monday 21 September a meeting of Camden Labour Group in Camden Town Hall was picketed by Camden Building Department Joint Trade Unions. Despite having voted at the Lambeth Conference to stand against cuts to jobs and services, Camden Labour council have made proposals to cut the budget of the Building Department.

They propose:

- 1 to stop all internal decorations for the elderly and disabled;
- 2 to cease all garden maintenance;
- 3 to stop all repairs on heating (there being no legal obligation to supply such a service).

Such cuts would lead not only to increased squalor and misery for the old, the poor and the disabled, but would entail the immediate loss of about 100 jobs within the department with the possibility of further losses in the near future.

At the meeting on Monday night, these proposals were to be brought to Camden Labour Group. There was to be no representation from the Direct Labour Department Joint Trade Unions (UCATT, BETPU,

TGWU) at the meeting, and only two UCATT observers were allowed.

Responding quickly to this attack the unions mobilised about 100 people for the picket with representatives from Camden NALGO, Kings Cross Women's Centre, HASSL, Camden Unemployment Action Centre, the RCP, the SWP and the RCG.

Due perhaps to the strength of opposition, the discussion on the cuts was deferred until a future meeting (date not yet fixed) when, significantly, a delegation from the Joint Trade Unions will be accepted.

Despite this minor victory, the feeling amongst the trade unionists present was one of bewilderment. 'We elected a Labour council and get Tory policies', stated the convenor of Joint Trade Unions.

People fighting for jobs and services are faced with a stark choice: either to bow down to Labour's opportunism, or to break links with the bankrupt movement and take a stand with all those forces fighting back against a system in which poverty, racism and repression are enshrined.

Jenny Sutton

NINE ARRESTS IN WESTMINSTER

On 29 September the government published their long-awaited white paper on housing. On 30 September nine people - including five Westminster Labour councillors - appeared at Horseferry Road Magistrates Court charged with various offences of obstruction and police assault.

The nine had been arrested during a Westminster Housing Committee meeting on 22 September. They and some 50 local residents and council workers protested against the council's housing plans. Some 40 Territorial Support Group thugs were sent in to break up the protest. One of the arrested, a local council worker, told FRFI how the TSG had sprained both his wrists and generally 'roughed everyone up'.

The protests have been sparked off by Tory Westminster Council's plan to dispose of - sell to the highest bidder - 11,000 of its 23,000 properties. They will be sold to whoever can pay. The council has abolished any residential qualifications.

Empty homes are being covered in iron-and-steel to keep them safe until some passing yuppie decides to buy them. Two and half million pounds have been set aside to finance a coun-

cil agency for selling homes. The 500 homeless families can look forward to living in prefab huts on a newly-acquired patch of industrial wasteland in Barking. Westminster plans to be the first council with its very own bantustan.

Small wonder that Westminster Housing Committee can now only meet in secret or with the protection of the TSG. Twenty people protested outside the court when the nine appeared. Further protests are planned.

Terry O'Halloran

Westminster is only the most extreme example of what is happening to the homeless. In next month's FRFI we are running a major feature on housing. Send us your information about the situation in your area. Write to: Housing, FRFI, BCM Box 3409, London WC1N 3XX.

News Notes

Holborn police have responded to an outbreak of racist attacks in the Camden area of London with their customary imagination. Despite evidence of organised fascist activity in the area, the police are investigating the possibility that the problem is 'fights between local groups of youth, one of whom happens to be Asian' (Crime Prevention Officer Sergeant Bill Ranson.)

Dr Richard Smith, in *Unemployment and Health*, estimates that unemployment causes 3,000 deaths a year. Unemployed men are twice as likely to commit suicide, 40% more likely to die of cancer and 75% more likely to die of lung cancer.

West Berkshire Health Authority announced last month the cancellation of 3,000 operations to save money. Patients requiring 'non-urgent' operations will have to wait at least six months longer. Doncaster announced that 1,000 'non-urgent' hospital admissions and 69 beds are to be cut.

Anatoli Mikeev, Soviet fire service head, estimates that Chernobyl caused £200 billion worth of economic damage. Chernobyl showed, he said, that there was no such thing as a safe nuclear plant.

The first full week of the NUM overtime ban, called to protest against British Coal's proposed disciplinary code, caused loss of production of 80,000 tonnes and cost an estimated £2.5 million. On 27 September the NUM executive voted by 12 to nine against extending the action.

British and Commonwealth Holdings (Bricom) are dipping their fingers in the apartheid honeypot. They will spend £55 million on establishing Royale Resorts International to run a chain of casinos. Their partners in this venture are Johannesburg-based Sun International. Their biggest casino will be in the infamous Sun City.

Last year half the women who wanted an abortion could not get one because of lack of NHS facilities. David Alton's private member's bill aimed at cutting the time limit to just 18 weeks will prevent even more women from getting an abortion.

At the end of August Home Secretary Douglas Hurd promised to end the use of police cells for remand prisoners within a week. At the end of September there were 600 remand prisoners in police cells. The government first promised to end this use of police cells in 1983. John Lewis, vice-chair Boards of Visitors, compared conditions in the police cells to the slums of Bombay. An 18 year old woman has spent six weeks in these conditions on suspicion of wasting police time and making abusive phone calls.

Mordechai Vanunu, ex-nuclear technician kidnapped by Mossad to face trial in Israel for his revelations about the Zionist nuclear bomb programme, began a hunger strike on 30 September. The hunger strike marks the anniversary of the kidnapping and is also a protest against his detention in isolation under 24 hour surveillance.

GULF WAR

Imperialists threaten as tension rises

Once again US imperialism is applying the principle of might is right in the Gulf War. Under President Reagan the US has shelled the Lebanon, invaded Grenada and bombed Libya. On 21 September US assault helicopters launched an attack on an Iranian ship in the Gulf. There was no warning given to the crew of the Iran Ajr, three of whom were killed. This was the logical outcome of the massive build up of US and British forces in the area. There are now more than 60 imperialist warships in the Gulf, including aircraft carriers and assault ships, carrying 25,000 men.

'UN peace initiative'

The outcome of United Nations General Secretary Perez de Cuellar's peace mission was a predictable failure. The imperialists are fully aware that it is Iraq which has been the main aggressor in the conflict. A prime example being the recent attacks on Iranian offshore oil sites around Kharg Island which reopened the 'tanker war' after a six week lull during the peace initiative. There was no realistic expectation that Iraq would agree to a settlement which did not recognise this. The UN initiative was clearly designed to make Iraq appear to be the main obstacle to peace and to legitimise such aggressive acts as the attack by the US.

Arms embargo

The US and Britain are now using Iraq's response to the attack - a

strike against a British flagged, Hong Kong registered ship and a thundering speech in the UN by President Khamenei threatening worldwide reprisals - to press for an immediate arms embargo against Iran. Sir Geoffrey Howe stated that the UN Security Council had no alternative but to vote for an embargo. He was defeated, but the US Senate voted for a trade embargo. The aim being to isolate Iran and redress the balance in the war in favour of Iraq.

Howe added that the government was closing down the Iranian arms procurement office near Victoria station: it purchased an estimated \$4 billion worth of weapons or 70% of Iranian supplies since 1980.

Imperialist hypocrisy

The pretext being used to launch this attack on Iran is the attack on the British flagged tanker coupled with



Iran Ajr being towed by US Navy

the claim that Iran is resuming mining of Gulf waters. This is complete hypocrisy given the recent US attack and the fact that US Defence Secretary Casper Weinberger had previously given an order to open fire 'without hesitation' on any target posing a threat. The mining of international waters is also something the US has little right to criticise Iran for given their own actions in mining waters off Vietnam and more recently Nicaragua in 1984. There was no outcry from British quarters over these acts of international terrorism which were condemned by the International Court of Justice in the Hague.

Strategic interests not peace

The US and British intervention in the Gulf has nothing to do with ensuring peace or the safe passage of shipping through the Gulf. It is a thoroughly cynical attempt to win strategic control over the whole Gulf area including Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait with whom US relations had been damaged by the Irangate scandal. By attempting to nullify Iran in the Gulf war imperialist interests are hoping to prevent the spread of Islamic fundamentalism and to persuade its allies of the need for permanent military bases in the area.

Andy Price

ARMS DEAL

Treaty on medium range missiles

Before the ink dried on the communique announcing an agreement to eliminate all medium and short range nuclear missiles, and signed by Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze and US Secretary of State George Shultz, the imperialists had begun to undermine the deal.

The proposed treaty will eliminate all US and Soviet medium and short range nuclear missiles in the world - a total of 1,100. It is the result of years of campaigning by peace activists and continuous Soviet diplomatic pressure. The treaty will be signed by Reagan and Gorbachev later this year.

The treaty has been agreed in principle with some 'technical' details to be sorted out. One such 'detail' is the USA's reluctance to scrap the warheads it has in store. Another is the procedure for eliminating the 72 Pershing 1A missiles based in West Germany.

The summit will also discuss proposals for a 50% reduction in strategic nuclear weapons. Also on the agenda will be the Shevardnadze and Shultz agreement to begin negotiations on nuclear tests before 1 December. The diplomatic offensive begun by the Soviet Union at the Reykjavik summit in 1986 is still moving forward. The counter-attack by the US and Britain is however, gathering pace.

Within hours of the meeting between Shevardnadze and Shultz, Casper Weinberger, US Secretary of

State for Defence, announced there would be a speeding up of the SDI (Star Wars) programme. According to the Pentagon, this would include exploring the development of space platforms from which small robots could be fired.

Thatcher's response to the breakthrough was to say 'In my opinion we should not disarm much further in nuclear arms'. She reinforced this position, significantly in West Berlin, at a meeting of conservative parties. She made it clear that she would not stand for any reduction at all in tactical or battlefield nuclear weapons. 'The nuclear weapon,' said Thatcher, 'has been the most powerful deterrent to world war we have ever known. It has kept us in peace... It has worked.'

This typical double-talk has to be exposed for what it is - war mongering. The nuclear breakthrough gained by the Soviet Union must be defended and pushed forward by all who are opposed to nuclear arms.

Typically the Labour Party chooses just this moment to 'rethink' its policy on unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Bob Shepherd

Due to rising costs we have had to increase the price of the paper to 40p. The unwaged rate will remain the same.

CONFIDENT SANDINISTAS

'We are determined to confront the US government's aggression against Central America by strengthening unity among the region's nations, so in the end the United States will be left isolated'.

Thus Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega introduced a series of measures implementing the Central American peace programme of 7 August (see FRFI 71).

On 20 September the Sandinistas announced the lifting of the ban on the newspaper *La Prensa* (a recipient of US finance that had supported the Contras). This was followed in quick succession by announcements that the Sandinistas were taking steps towards a unilateral ceasefire, permitting Radio Católica to broadcast, granting amnesty to some political prisoners, and seeking some form of 'communication' with middle-ranking Contra field-commanders.

None of these moves is a sign of Sandinista weakness. They could not have been made without the military defeats inflicted upon the Contras. They were timed to coincide with Costa Rican President Arias' visit to Washington to apply pressure on Congress not to renew aid to the Contras. They received the backing of the figurehead of reaction in Nicaragua Cardinal Obando, but were denounced as a trick by US Assistant Secretary of State Elliot Abrams. Contra director Aristides Sanchez said 'There is no ceasefire. We take it as a simple publicity stunt on President Ortega's part'.

The Sandinistas are confident of the backing of the Nicaraguan people. With this support they are able to undermine the Reagan Central American strategy of low-intensity war, threaten the Contras with isolation and create a breach in the ranks of counter-revolution.

Trevor Rayne



BTR strikers from South Africa and players in the Long March join Dunlop strikers in Leicester

SARMCOL WORKERS IN BRITAIN

The Long March

The fight for trade union recognition at the British Tyre and Rubber/Sarmcol factory at Howick, South Africa, has been a long one. Since the 1950s the workers have been struggling for union recognition. On 4 March 1985 the workers balloted to strike over the company's failure to recognise the union. The strike began on 30 April 1985. On 2 May Sarmcol management fired all 270 strikers.

The workers formed the Sarmcol Workers Co-operative (Sawco), MAWU (now NUMSA) took BTR to the Industrial Court in its continued fight for union recognition and for reinstatement for all the sacked workers. For over a year, a thousand sacked metal workers travelled to each hearing of the court case. It came as no surprise when, on 17 September 1987, the result of the court case was announced: the strikers lost. The judgement shocked NUMSA unionists, not so much the verdict but the statements made by the judge in justifying the decision.

'A disturbing feature which was disclosed by the evidence in this case was the form of collective democracy practised by this union... The members of this court, given the circumstances of the present case, have some reservations whether this philosophy, if correctly understood, can properly be entertained or even tolerated by present day society in this country.' (Weekly Mail, 18-24 September, 1987).

FRFI is proud to publish a speech given by one of the strikers shortly after the court verdict was announced.

Nick Lewis

'Until May 1985 I was an ordinary worker as an employee of BTR Company in the small town of Howick in South Africa. Together with a thousand other workers I went on strike at that time, in order to pressure BTR to recognise our union, the Metalworkers Union, which we now call NUMSA. Within a few days of the strike starting, BTR dismissed all the

strikers. Fifty went back, 950 remained on strike, and have now done so for two and a half years.

Our strike is the longest strike in South African history. Survival has been very difficult, but what we have relied on is our union. Even now, after thirty months on strike, the strikers live every week without a wage, to receive our demands off BTR. Negotiate with our union or get out of South Africa! ...

Comrades, we have tried to find many ways to survive and to maintain our unity, but two and a half years on strike is a very long time. We need your support to develop pressure on BTR, to force the company to settle this dispute. Our union, which is NUMSA, sees the tour of *The Long March* as the first step in this campaign against BTR in the UK. BTR in Britain has called this struggle of ours a 'minor matter'.

In South Africa we have brought all sorts of pressure to bear on BTR to negotiate. We have boycotted white shops in the area, we have had demonstrations blockading the streets of Pietermaritzburg. We have had stay-aways which polarised the whole region. In South Africa our union has supported us by organising other BTR workers in sympathy strikes. Our union has also maintained a constant supply of food parcels to keep our families alive.

In Britain we have received very welcome financial support from the TUC and from unions organising BTR workers. But we need more. For example, we need councils to refuse contracts with BTR Engineering and Construction services. We need to organise workers in the car industry and in the health service to challenge BTR supplies. BTR is a

low profile company but it has high profile subsidiaries. For instance, Dunlop Sport has advertising contracts with world famous sports players. We can challenge these personalities to distance themselves from BTR.

There are some people in Britain who say that only top-level sanctions will change things in South Africa. They say that all efforts should be directed to this government. Our experience teaches us to see things differently. Our union movement in South Africa has been built on a thousand small factories. All their struggles together have made our union movement into one of the largest challenges to apartheid that the system has ever heard.

We believe that the pressure at the top level actually arises from the struggle on the ground. That is why we are appealing to you now on this issue. That is why we see it as so important. We believe that people in Britain helping our strike in South Africa will be a major blow to apartheid...

We believe that we can defeat BTR if there is enough support in Britain for the NUMSA campaign against BTR.

We have withstood attacks from the police and from Inkatha vigilantes, which have terrorised our communities and resulted in many deaths of our comrades. So we have vowed to fight on, no matter how long it takes. We appeal to you to support us, by supporting the NUMSA campaign against BTR.

Amandla!

For further information about the Strikers and their play *The Long March* contact: SAWCO, c/o 12 Manor Road Extension, Leicester LE2 4FF. Tel: (0533) 712041.

Dewsbury: Racist offensive in education



Headfield Middle School pupils

The Tories created the racist climate for the Dewsbury school dispute in the build up to the general election via Baker's plans for education, to be implemented in 1989. Education Secretary, Kenneth Baker, speaking on BBC Radio Jimmy Young's programme, admitted that his plans could lead to a growth in all-white, all black or all-Asian schools.

The result is a campaign by racist parents to get their children to attend the predominately white Overthorpe School in preference to Headfield Middle School, which has 85% Asian pupils. The parents in fact see themselves as a vanguard for Baker's education plans. Eric Haley, the parents' leader said, 'We are the guinea pigs because we are fighting for what Mr Baker wants'.

The parents are desperately denying they are racist, claiming that it is a cultural matter, and a matter of choice. They are producing black right wingers to support them, and the local press make a point of highlighting Muslim organisations that support segregation. There is no way the parents campaign can hide its racist, reactionary position.

Eric Haley, the parents' leader is a lifelong Conservative voter, anti-union

GORDON AND NOMSA

and opponent of multi-cultural education. He says, 'you cannot mix Islam and Christianity. You can't teach Asian children Church of England culture. They don't want to know.' Kirklees Council, a hung council, Haley describes as 'loony left'. The campaign receives support from John Whitfield, ex-Tory MP for Dewsbury who drew up the parents appeal to the Education Authority. Their adviser is Reg Naylor who is a member of Parents Alliance for Choice in Education, and the right wing Freedom Association. Ray Honeyford, the racist ex-head of Drummond Middle School, Bradford, is more than ready to give support since, in his words, 'when you get a disproportionate number of children using English as a second language, then in my view

standards tend to fall'.

Fascist forces are also being unleashed by the parents' racist campaign and the government's tacit support. For example, in mid-September, Dowager Lady Birdwood met with Eric Haley and advised him that 'moslem invaders have founded between 300 and 400 Mosques in our cities. Pagan religious rites now take precedence over traditional Christian observance. Pastoral care has become coloured care.' In the same message she advised him to 'seek out and straighten your multi-racial churchmen' and ended with a call to attack '30 years of multi-racial experimentation in Britain'. Lady Birdwood has impeccable imperialist credentials - she is a notorious fascist. She was the daughter-in-law of Field Marshall Lord Birdwood, formerly Commander-in-Chief in India. She has been on the executive of the Monday Club and has spoken at National Front rallies. At the 1983 Bermondsey by-election, she stood as Independent Patriot and is currently a member of the British League of Rights (an anti-Semitic and anti-communist organisation).

Lady Birdwood's disgusting racist messages were described by Eric Haley as 'constructive talks'. How constructive was revealed the following weekend when a gang of 50 racist thugs, yelling their support for the parents' campaign, attacked Asian taxi drivers in Batley, damaging five taxis. The British National Party had planned to hold a fascist parade through the black areas of Dewsbury on 3 October. They called it off at the request of the parents.

Opposition to the campaign and the fascists is growing. Parents from Headfield and anti-racist teachers have produced trade union resolutions, leaflets and petitions which are distributed every Saturday in Dewsbury town centre and Leeds NUT has already stated its opposition to the parents campaign.

GLASGOW:

Anti-racist group organises to fight

Attacks by racists on Glasgow's Asian community have escalated recently. Asian families living in Glasgow housing schemes have been subjected to vandalism, stone throwing, stabbings and attempted murders. Asian shops have been ransacked and many families are afraid to leave their homes. In the Southside of Glasgow children have to be escorted to school for their own safety. Particularly horrendous attacks include an Asian man being thrown in front of a tube train and an Asian shopkeeper being savagely beaten with a wooden club embedded with nails.

KIM COLEMAN & GARETH JENKINS

Behind many of these attacks stands the fascist British National Party (BNP). For many years it has been organising within the anti-Indian loyalist community and has now extended its racist attacks to Scotland's black community. The BNP organises round the slogan 'Keep Britain white - hang IRA scum'. Besides selling their papers at Rangers football matches, the BNP has begun a drive to organise white racists in schools which have a high percentage of Asian pupils.

Despite all the evidence the Strathclyde police have refused to act, denying that these attacks were 'racially motivated'. As in other parts of the country, the police refuse to respond to calls for help from black people. The Scottish Asian Action

Committee - which has had its own offices daubed with slogans such as 'Hess lives' - have presented detailed evidence to the police, yet there has been no action. Inevitably and necessarily black people are themselves beginning to organise to defeat the racists. In November, the Scottish Asian Action Committee will be organising a demonstration on the day the BNP is scheduled to hold its annual public meeting in Glasgow. Last year the Committee successfully stopped the BNP meeting.

For more information contact the Scottish Asian Action Committee, 537 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow.

Campaigning against 'Prison Ship Britain'



Detainees at Harmondsworth detention centre

Opposition to Britain's policy towards refugees and immigrants is growing. On 6 September, groups across the country including the RCG staged 'Prison Ship Britain' demonstrations at detention centres, prisons and police stations. Besides the centres at Harmondsworth, Latchmere House and the ferry at Harwich more than 3 dozen prisons and most police stations at some time are used to hold immigrants for up to 2 days. Every port and airport has its own facilities or has a police station as a back up. In 1988 more than 1,000 people were in detention - charged, in the case of refugees, with no crimes; in the case of immigrants 'overstaying' is the only charge. The number has grown alarmingly since then.

Prison staff, police and the private security firm Securicor are thus incorporated into the notorious immigration service. In addition the Home Office has set up an internal surveillance system that uses various public services to spy on black people. In recent months people

have been seized at GPs' surgeries, and DHSS offices, by the police and taken for deportation, with no right of appeal. Now immigrants report that they are increasingly afraid to use hospitals, housing offices, DHSS offices for fear of arbitrary arrest.

On 5 September, groups in London picketed Holloway women's prison, Southwark Immigration Services and a police station in north London to indicate the range of the threat. Then, on Sunday, Leicester organisations were joined by others from the West Midlands at a rain soaked Leicester prison where immigrants are held. In the pouring rain at Bradford prison, groups assembled in the morning, and went off to join Leeds that afternoon at the sanctuary. Manchester likewise assembled people at Viraj's sanctuary. East Anglia towns, especially Norwich, held an action at the Harwich prison hulk. London groups marched from Southall to Harmondsworth, while others went to Latchmere House.

Civil rights march

On Saturday 3 October, nearly 1500 people joined the civil rights march from Broadwater Farm Estate Tottenham, North London to Hyde Park for a rally of over 20 speakers. Many demonstrators joined the lively anti-imperialist contingent led by the RCG, the VMDC and City AA. The march stopped briefly outside the South African Embassy in solidarity with the Non-Stop Picket and again at Downing Street where statements from relatives of Broadwater Farm prisoners and the civil rights movement were handed in.

Amongst the many Labour Party speakers was Diane Abbott who publicly pledged support for the relatives' campaign. She has yet to sign their petition 'freedom for the framed prisoners'. Others from Black Sections apologised for the fact that the London Labour Party had publicly denounced the march. Chris Proctor, speaking for the VMDC said 'Let us make the Home Office regret every day that Viraj Mendis has been in sanctuary and every day that the innocent prisoners of Broadwater Farm have been in prison.'

Sectarian elements unsuccessfully tried to prevent a speaker from the March for Mayekiso Committee from addressing the rally despite the fact that they had been invited to speak. Both Winston Silcott and Mark Braithwaite's fathers spoke of the torment of having their sons framed. But it was Sharon Raghip, wife of Engin, who gave the fighting speech of the day. She pledged that the struggle for justice, for the framed prisoners would go on.

Simon Davidson
Ken Hughes

Victory for Leicester sanctuary

On Monday 18 September, Renukaben Lakhani won an outright victory against the Home Office attempt to deport her to India. Since 8 August Renuka had been in sanctuary in the Shree Sanatan Mandir Temple in Leicester. When she went into sanctuary, she stated: 'I intend to stay inside the temple until I can be reunited permanently with my husband. We are a family and want to stay in this country.'

Renuka came to Britain in July 1986 to attend a family gathering. Within a month she had met and married Vipin Lakhani, a British citizen, and in April 1987 their daughter Riya was born. Despite this, the Home Office on 2 July ordered her to return to India. She refused to go. Local MP Keith Vaz, in his maiden speech in the House of Commons said:

'It is a disgrace. The woman has fallen in love, married a British citizen and has now been told to leave the country and abandon her child. And this from the government that believes in family values.'

The Home Office remained adamant and even 'offered' to pay for Renuka's baby to accompany her to India. Rather than surrender, Renuka and her supporters, taking inspiration from the VMDC went into sanctuary. After five weeks of campaigning, she won mass support in the local community. The VMDC Lesbian and Gay Group visited her on her first day in sanctuary and over 9000 signatures were collected demanding her right to stay. The Home Office, fearing another sanctuary campaign conceded defeat! Renuka has been granted indefinite leave to stay.

Tony Openshaw



Renukaben Lakhani

APARTHEID'S WAR AGAINST ANGOLA AND MOZAMBIQUE

Parallel with its bloody repression of the revolution in South Africa, Botha's apartheid regime is conducting an unrelenting and savage war against the peoples' governments of Angola and Mozambique.

At the end of September, South African authorities openly admitted that South African Defence Force (SADF) troops had invaded Angola to bolster UNITA counter-revolutionary bandits against an impending Angolan offensive. A South African military spokesman declared 'It is in South Africa's highest interest that the pro-Western UNITA survives'. For 12 years, UNITA forces directly assisted by Botha's army have wreaked havoc on the Angolan people and economy: \$12bn in war damage, 60,000 deaths, a vast number of injured and maimed, 150,000 refugees and 600,000 people who have fled the countryside to the cities. UNITA has survived only because on each occasion it was faced with an Angolan military offensive, the SADF has come to its aid. The present SADF intervention has the same aim of preventing a decisive defeat for UNITA.

Simultaneously, in Mozambique, the MNR cut-throats, with apartheid assistance, are continuing to ravage the country using the most brutal methods. The MNR specialises in terrorism: cutting of villagers' legs, ears or arms, massacring civilians travelling on buses, destroying medical clinics and schools. Their operations have devastated the economy and caused



Bodies of those massacred by terrorists in Mozambique

widespread famine. Most recently, the MNR under South African direction have expanded their brutal war against Zimbabwe. Since June they have raided the country 11 times killing and abducting civilians, shooting soldiers, robbing stores, laying landmines and poisoning water supplies.

The British government is easy with its hypocritical denunciations of Arab, Irish and other national liberation 'terrorists', but turns a blind eye to the real terrorists - the likes of the MNR and UNITA backed by the South African regime: they, being 'pro-Western' will naturally safeguard imperialist interests in the region.

Edith M. M. M.

Jury refuses to convict paint throwers

"An act of the highest morality"

On Wednesday 30 September City AA won the first round in its battle to defend three comrades who threw paint on the South African embassy on 6 May, the day of the whites-only election in South Africa. Despite being directed by Judge Paiba to find the three guilty of criminal damage to the embassy, the Southwark Crown Court jury failed to reach a majority verdict on any of the counts.

Irene and Liz Minezer and Adam Bowles stated in court that they had thrown almost a gallon of red paint over the doorway of the embassy in a lawful attempt to prevent the crime of apartheid. All three defended the right of anti-apartheid activists to take effective action against apartheid: in this case the front doors of the Embassy were closed for three days.

Adam Bowles, FRFI supporter, gave the position of all the defendants when he said, 'the South African embassy is part of the South African state... No one has the right to stand by and watch while torture, murder and oppression go on.'

In addition to damaging the Embassy the three were gratuitously charged with damaging a policeman's uniform and his personal property: one pair of black boots, one pair of socks and one pair of longjohns(!).

Three expert witnesses appeared for the defence. Zolile Keke, from the Central Committee of the Pan-Africanist Congress of Azania, spoke about his own experience of torture and imprisonment on Robben Island. Norma Kitson, leading South African anti-apartheid campaigner and founding member of City AA, also described her experience of detention in South Africa and the imprisonment of her husband, David. David Leigh, associate editor of *The Observer*, gave evidence about the embassy's illegal activities: burglary and firebombing of anti-apartheid offices; arms smuggling; giving refuge to, and bail for South Africans accused of sanctions busting.

Summing up the defence, barrister John Riley, echoing Norma Kitson, said that the throwing of the paint represented 'an act of the highest morality'. He told the jury that

the defendants were entitled to be acquitted. He warned them that if they returned a guilty verdict there would be 'laughter tonight in Johannesburg. They will know that they can use the law as they please.'

Judge Paiba categorically instructed the jury to find all the defendants guilty on the first count - of causing £1270 worth of criminal damage to the embassy. But the jury clearly wanted to consider the issues in the case: they asked whether the embassy came under British jurisdiction and whether UN resolutions apply in British law. Their questions were dismissed by Paiba. Despite this the jury, which included five black people, was out for more than three hours and failed to reach even a majority verdict on any of the counts.

The political defence had impressed on members of the jury that apartheid is indeed a crime and, despite the Judge's categorical rulings, they clearly considered a mere application of British law would not equate with justice.

After the jury had been dismissed, the Judge attempted to order a retrial but was prevented by the prosecution barrister who wished to make representations to his 'clients'.

Perhaps he too was impressed by the powerful defence. Within twenty four hours, however, the three defendants were told that the re-trial will go ahead despite the prosecution barrister's recommendations. Political forces were at work here and there is no doubt that there was no laughter in either Johannesburg or Whitehall after the verdict. We have won the first round. We are ready for the second.

*Terry O'Halloran
Cat Wiener*

MARCH FOR MOSES MAYEKISO

Every single marcher on the 10 October demonstration to free Moses Mayekiso and all South African political prisoners will be there despite the opposition of an unholy alliance including the Anti-Apartheid Movement, sections of the British trade union leadership, the Socialist Workers Party and the Metropolitan Police.

ANDY HIGGINSBOTTOM

200 people joined the March for Mayekiso Committee's rally outside the racist South African Embassy in Trafalgar Square. There were banners from the RCG, Vauxhall College NATFHE, Hammersmith and Fulham Trades Council, the Psychic Youth, the Humanist Party and the Non-Stop Picket. They heard that Moses Mayekiso and the four co-defendants have been placed in a single cell together with eight comrades from the Alexandra Youth Congress also awaiting trial for treason.

The rally was joined by comrades from Namibia, by Comrade Zolile Keke and the new Acting Chief Representative of the PAC Comrade Rodwell Mzotane who are both former Robben Island inmates, by former political prisoner Paul Treveltha, by Peter Gibson, Chair of the London Bus Committee of the TGWU, and enlivened by the fantastic samba music of Batucada Mandela. Another graduate of apartheid's prisons, David Kitson, brushed aside the detractors of the campaign to free Mayekiso: 'well actually, there are some personalities who need cultivating'. Carol Brickley, City AA Convenor, said that the AAM opposed Moses Mayekiso because they were frightened of what he stood for: people's power. David Reed, speaking for the RCG, said that City AA always has to

fight on three fronts: against Thatcher, against the police; and against the opportunists in Britain. He urged the SWP to think again and support 10 October.

The RCG has been on the streets to mobilise for Mayekiso. On 5 September, in Peckham south London we held a street meeting with speeches and South African freedom songs. 400 passers-by bought FRFI to read the story of Mayekiso. The next Saturday in Islington, north London, we sold 180 FRFI at a street meeting despite heavy rain. The RCG has held public meetings in Dundee, Glasgow, Manchester, North and South London. The March for Mayekiso Committee and City AA have been to the TUC and Labour Party conferences, at the dock queues, speaking in colleges and trade unions.

A number of trade unions have sponsored, following the principled solidarity of Arthur Scargill who wrote 'I can confirm that I support any demonstration, rally or picket in support of the campaign for Moses Mayekiso or any other black South African leader suffering as a result of the apartheid regime'.

The AAM's opposition to the campaign has awakened many more people to its sectarianism. At Hammersmith Labour Party a motion in support of Mayekiso was amended by AAM hack Senmas Milne to delete support for the Friends of Moses Mayekiso and the 10 October demonstration. NALGO Head Office has intensified its anti-Mayekiso campaign - an attempt to dissuade activists in Leicester hinged on a statement issued by SACTU, but the executive of Leicestershire NALGO refused to be bullied and supports 10 October. Zola Zembe, SACTU representative, visited Haringey AA group in September to argue against support for Friends of Moses Mayekiso and the march. The AAM and the SWP have done a deal, to keep people off the streets for Moses Mayekiso. The Friends of Moses Mayekiso newsletter censored all publicity for 10 October. When an RCG member challenged the SWP at a public meeting in Islington to explain why they would not support 10 October their reply was that the AAM had apologised to them for the original *Observer* report, so that everything was okay between them and to march on 10 October for Mayekiso 2 weeks before the AAM's demonstration for sanctions was 'sectarian lunacy'. At the Institute of Education in London the SWP opposed a motion supporting the March for Mayekiso and replaced it with affiliation to the Friends of Moses Mayekiso. The SWP leadership have gone to the length of organising an all London aggregate for 10 October, to keep their members off the streets that day.

The number of 'sectarian lunatics' supporting Mayekiso is growing, and the

ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT SANCTIONS NOW!

Demonstration
Saturday 24 October

Join the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group contingent
• MANDELA • MOTHOPENG •
• MAYEKISO • MPETHA •
FREE ALL SOUTH AFRICAN AND
NAMIBIAN POLITICAL PRISONERS!
Assemble 12 noon, Embankment
March to Hyde Park
TORCHLIGHT RALLY
7pm SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY
TRAFALGAR SQUARE

JOIN THE NON-STOP PICKET

City AA has been picketing the racist South African Embassy every day and night since 19 April 1986. The picket demands the release of Nelson Mandela and all South African and Namibian political prisoners, and that the Embassy is closed down. Every opponent of apartheid is welcome to come and join the Non-Stop Picket. Pledge a regular time. Make a donation to the Picket.

Every Friday at 6pm there are
special rallies on the picket

9 October: Children Under Torture

16 October: Free Wilton Mkwayi -
sentenced to life
imprisonment

23 October: Free Ismail Ebrahim -
kidnapped and detained
by South African police

FREE MOSES MAYEKISO!

RALLY

1st day of the trial
Monday 19 October
6pm

SOUTH AFRICA HOUSE
TRAFALGAR SQUARE
(Charing Cross tube)

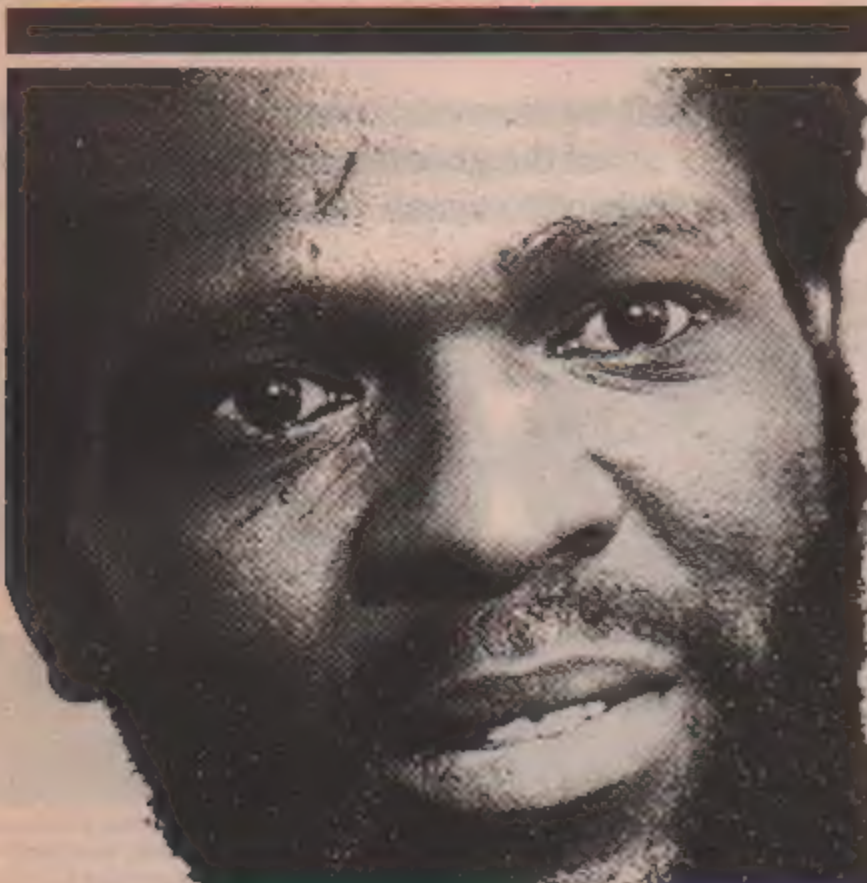
March for Mayekiso Committee
City of London Anti-Apartheid Group

police are also preparing for 10 October. Cannon Row police, frequent attackers of the Non-Stop Picket, have refused use of a PA system for the rally outside the Embassy. Their decision not to use crowd barriers only adds to concern that they are intent on attacking the rally, as they did City AA's rally on 19 April.

The RCG fully supports 10 October which breaks from the sectarianism of the AAM and the SWP. The campaign does not end on 10 October; we will continue to support all events for the release of Mayekiso and urge all our readers to actively participate in the campaign.



JUN KUNSTER



RELEASE MOSES MAYEKISO

RELEASE ALL SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL PRISONERS AND DETAINEES

HANDS OFF COSATU

END BRITISH COLLABORATION WITH APARTHEID

★ Join the

MARCH for MOSES MAYEKISO

Saturday 10 October

ASSEMBLE CLERKENWELL GREEN EC1 12 NOON

(nearest tube Farringdon-Circle and Metropolitan)

**MARCH TO RACIST SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY
TRAFALGAR SQUARE**

Organised by the March for Mayekiso Committee

THE INDICTMENT

On 19 October the trial begins of Moses Mayekiso and his comrades. The indictment accuses the five of setting out to: 'seize control of the residential area of ALEXANDRA and/or to render the area ungovernable by the State, by ... establishing so-called organs of people's power ... forming the ALEXANDRA ACTION COMMITTEE ... organising and uniting the residents of ALEXANDRA into yard, block and street committees under the AAC, and/or forming their own courts (hereinafter referred to as People's Courts) and/or forming a group known as the Marshalls and/or Comrades ... launching a campaign against the South African Police Force and/or ... so-called collaborators, and/or launching a rent boycott and/or a consumer boycott and/or ... changing the existing names of streets in ALEXANDRA to MK, Steve Biko, Soviet, Mandela, ANC, Lesaka, Katrida, Mabhida, Siovo, Mbeki, Vincent, Sobukwe, Bazonka, Oliver and Dos Santos streets, ...'

They are accused of exhibiting tyres in the People's Court at 31 7th Avenue. Also, apparently as heinous a crime as the tyres, they are accused of keeping or causing to be kept 'in a trunk before and/or on 2 April 1986 at 31 7th Avenue seventy two T-shirts with the words "ALEXANDRA ACTION COMMITTEE" printed thereon ...'

Finally, what is called the 'SUMMARY OF THE SUBSTANTIAL FACTS' accuses Moses Mayekiso of holding or expressing *inter alia* the following views:

'1 (a) that the working class (also refer-

red to as the proletariat), as the vanguard for liberation, should be in the centre of and in control of the struggle,

(b) that the working class, including the unemployed, the youth and other members of the community should be mobilised, organised and united against the capitalist system and the State,

(c) that the working class or its unions and the so-called progressive organisations should seize control of the means of production and of the residential areas,

(d) that the so-called capitalists must be forced into a situation where they are unable to exercise control,

(e) that South Africa is ripe for a social, economic and political revolution,

(f) that the existing constitutional, political, social and economical dispensation of the State should be replaced with a different and socialist political dispensation,

(g) that liaison and co-ordination with other organisations, for instance the African National Congress, should take place in order to achieve the afore-mentioned goals,

(h) that people should refuse to pay rent as a short term solution to their problems.'

The period from January 1985 to June 1986 saw the height of the townships' revolt. The indictment gives an unprecedented picture of how the people fought to establish their own power. All the more reason for all progressive organisations and individuals in Britain to unite in support of Moses Mayekiso and his comrades.

Terry O'Halloran

Editorial

Moses Mayekiso, Paul Tshabalala, Richard Mdakane, Obed Sapela and Mzwanele Mayekiso are on trial for their lives, charged with treason and sedition. They are respectively the Chair, the Vice-Chair, the Secretary General, the Publicity Secretary and 'an organiser' of the Alexandra Action Committee. They have been charged because of their involvement in organising the community of Alexandra township to resist apartheid attacks in 1985 and 1986.

Moses Mayekiso is not only a leading political force in his community, he is General Secretary of the militant National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA), formerly MAWU, and an executive member of COSATU. The indictment against the five charges them with the belief that 'the working class including the unemployed, the youth and other members of the community, should be mobilised, organised and united against the capitalist system and the state'. It is this connection between the organised working class in militant trade unions and the risen working class communities in the townships which the regime most fears. This is the reason why Moses Mayekiso and his comrades now stand trial for their lives.

On these grounds alone, no-one calling themselves socialist or supporting liberation in South Africa could refuse to support a campaign to free Moses Mayekiso and his comrades. But this is not the case in imperialist Britain. Many forces are pursuing their own sectarian interests before the main priority which is to build mass support in Britain for the five standing trial.

On 13 September 1987 *The Observer* published a short item under the heading 'Campaign Curbed'.

'The Anti-Apartheid Movement, backed by leaders of the African National Congress in London, is opposing the campaign launched to free Moses Mayekiso, a leading South African trade unionist under threat of execution for alleged high treason and sedition. It says the campaign is based on a "personality cult" and is run by Trotskyists. Union leaders, who have been backing the efforts to free Mr Mayekiso, have been approached. The General Secretary of the white-collar union Nalگو, Mr John Daly, has written to all union branches to tell them that the campaign is "contrary to Nalگو policy".'

We have obtained copies of statements from both NALGO and SACTU which confirm the details in the *Observer* report.

On 25 August, NALGO issued instructions to its branches not to affiliate to Friends of Moses Mayekiso. In the covering letter from John Daly, Moses Mayekiso is described as 'one detained trade union leader', the implication being that he is one among many in this position. Nowhere in the document are NALGO members told that Moses Mayekiso is standing trial for treason or the reasons for the charges. In paragraph 3.1 the position is spelt out further:

'The Campaign [Friends of Moses Mayekiso] singles out one individual trade union leader for solidarity action in "personality cult" fashion rather than concentrating on the political issue of trade unionists being detained for their legitimate trade union and political activities, which is responsible for the imprisonment of thousands of trade unionists.' (our emphasis)

The implication here is that Moses Mayekiso was detained for something other than 'legitimate trade union and political activities'. No doubt the NALGO leadership views the establishment of people's power in Alexandra Township as strictly illegitimate. Having buried the real reasons for campaigning to free Mayekiso, the NALGO leadership takes refuge in the accusation that this is a 'personality cult'. As David Kitson so rightly pointed out in his speech to the Non-Stop Picket rally on 14 September, 'there are

some personalities who need cultivating'.

NALGO goes on to attempt to justify their essentially sectarian political interests.

'3.3 It is equally inappropriate for such a campaign to be organised by a political grouping, as is the case, COSATU at its Congress in July defined clearly the criteria which an organisation must meet before COSATU will consider co-operating with it.

One major criterion is that it must be "progressive" and have "principles and policies ... compatible with those of organised workers in COSATU"; the "Friends of Moses Mayekiso Campaign" by its refusal to consult with the Congress Movement has clearly aligned itself against the principles and policies of the progressive democratic movement in South Africa of which COSATU is a key participant.'

This is an extraordinary sleight of hand. Much though some people would like it to be, the 'Congress Movement' of South Africa is not synonymous either with COSATU or the 'progressive movement in South Africa'. Hundreds of thousands of workers in South Africa are not aligned with the Congress Movement, but by any standards (except those of NALGO) must be counted part of the liberation movement. Shorn of its official facade, the NALGO statement is nothing more than crude political sectarianism. It must be rejected.

The NALGO statement relies for much of its authority on a statement issued by the exiled trade union wing of the Congress Movement, SACTU, which in trying to stake its claim to speak for all trade unionists in South Africa, SACTU has considerable influence amongst the British trade union bureaucracy in defining how British trade unionists should relate to the trade union movement in South Africa. It wishes to limit all campaigns and solidarity to industrial unions in the same sector after consultation with SACTU officials in Britain. This means no mass campaign is ever possible.

Furthermore, using the fact that a minor part of the indictment against Mayekiso involves the possession of left wing British literature from the SWP and Militant, the SACTU statement implies that these groups - not Mayekiso's role in the Alexandra Action Committee - were responsible, by their 'recklessness' for Mayekiso's arrest. It follows, therefore, that any campaign for Mayekiso involving the SWP and Militant should not be supported.

This again is based on crude sectarianism. The SACTU statement gives the game away: 'Historically these sectarian groups have, and continue to hold a position critical of our Congress Alliance'. In other words those who do not accept either the political standpoint of the Congress Movement or its claim to have a monopoly of speaking for the oppressed in South Africa should not be part of any campaign - however broad-based - in solidarity with the struggle against apartheid. This lies at the heart of the Congress Movement's attitude to solidarity in Britain and is instrumental in determining the character of the AAM. Putting the political interests of a particular party, in this case the South African Communist Party, before the interests of the movement as a whole is the definition of sectarianism. Could it be that they also believe that Mayekiso is 'tainted' by his contact with revolutionary politics in

Britain and it is their opposition to Mayekiso's political activities which lies behind their scurrilous statement and this determined attempt to prevent the campaign?

On Friday 18 September, Friends of Mayekiso published a full page advertisement in *The Guardian* listing hundreds of trade unions, individuals and organisations (including City AA and the RCG but very few AA groups) who support the campaign. On 20 September the *Observer* again published a short report, a carefully worded apology to the AAM for daring to suggest that it 'opposed campaigning for the release of Moses Mayekiso'. Many have been fooled into interpreting this statement as a withdrawal of the AAM/SACTU/NALGO position.

At an SWP meeting in London an SWP speaker claimed that the AAM had apologised to them for *The Observer* report. All's well that ends well, and the SWP went on to describe the march for Mayekiso on 10 October as 'sectarian lunacy'. The SWP is still refusing to support the march.

In reality nothing has changed. The AAM may not be opposed to 'campaigning' for Mayekiso in the abstract but in practice it has been, and continues to be, opposed to the only forces in existence which do any campaigning. It was an AAM member who tore down the banner, shredded the leaflets and prevented Friends of Moses Mayekiso from speaking at the Hammersmith Trades Council meeting (see *FRFI* 71). NALGO executives are still peddling their tawdry, shameful report and recently travelled up to Leicester to bring the local NALGO branch into line. It was Seumas Milne, the AAM's tame hack *Guardian* journalist and *Morning Star* associate, who argued in Hammersmith Labour Party to delete support for Friends of Moses Mayekiso and the 10 October March from a motion to support the campaign. None of these tired opportunists will be marching for Mayekiso on 10 October.

It was in the SWP's political interests to be fooled by *The Observer* apology. The AAM may have been frightened of the complete exposure of their sectarianism revealed in the original *Observer* report, but it will not prevent them from continuing their underhand campaign to isolate support for Mayekiso. The SWP knows this but prefers the stilt of a cosy relation with the AAM to a political battle with the opportunists who, after all, still control the diminishing legions of the aristocracy of labour which the SWP imagines constitutes the proletarian vanguard.

In an article in *Socialist Review*, theoretical journal of the SWP, October 1985, the SWP offers its own brand of eurocentric advice to Moses Mayekiso:

'Lenin's conception of the party was very different [from Moses Mayekiso's]. Because its task was to mobilise workers for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a workers' state, it would have to carry out a relentless battle against all those elements inside the working class movement that base themselves on compromise.'

There is, apparently, one standard for Moses Mayekiso and another for the SWP. The SWP should have their own words rammed down their throats.

On 10 October City AA drawing together many other organisations, and with the full support of the RCG, is holding a march for Moses Mayekiso. Along with its rally on the non-stop picket on 14 September, this will be the only activity organised in Britain to support Moses Mayekiso and his comrades whose trial starts on 19 October. Because of the divisive antics of the AAM and SWP it will be smaller than it could have been. Nevertheless, it will represent a break with the rotten traditions of the British left. It will represent a stand on the side of democracy, open and non-sectarian campaigning, indeed everything that Moses Mayekiso stands for.

COMMUNIST EXPLOITATION:
Anatolian Culture Centre, Avanza-Chilean Womens Group, Tony Benn MP, Bob Clay MP, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Eric Heffer MP, Simon Hughes MP, Ken Livingstone MP, Dennis Skinner MP, Arthur Scargill, Dave Douglass Hatfield Main NUM (personal capacity), Peter Heathfield (personal capacity), Eric Isley MP, Joan Whalley MP, John Hughes MP, Dennis Canavan MP, Mildred Gordon MP, Ron Todd (personal capacity), West Midlands Association Trades Councils, Revd David Clendon, Labour Party Black Sections, Lynne Reid Banks, Timmish Desai (Chair Newham Monitoring Project), N A Goodman MP, Keith Var MP, A J Bevan (Mill Glamorgan District Secretary AEU), Les Huckfield MEP, Alf Lomas MEP, Carol Tongue MEP, Merton Mechanics Branch NUM, Lewisham and Deptford Womens Centre, Labour Women for Ireland, Joan Maynard, Reg Raine, Croydon Womens Centre, Kings Cross Womens Centre, The Revolutionary Communist Group, The Revolutionary Democratic Group, The Workers Revolutionary Party (Workers Press), NALGO Leicester Branch, NALGO HA Branch, NALGO Ilkington Social Services, CPSA DE London NW Branch, NUJ London Freelance Branch, Olive Anderson, Michael Hoffman, David Reed, Louise Christian, A H Anott, Peter Tatchell, Clr Anne Green, Clr Graham Todd, Clr Keith Venn, Clr Adrian Stokes, Valerie Venn, Linda Bellow, Totton and District Trades Council, Ipswich District Trades Council, Wear Valley District Trades Council, Watford and District Trades Council, West Midlands Defence Campaign, Dundee Anti-Apartheid Group, The Moat House Strikers, Tower Hamlets Workers Support Group, Crawley Friends of Moses Mayekiso, Caringham Ward Hammersmith Labour Party, CPSA Department of Employment West London Branch, Hyndburn Trades Council, Shena Simon College Student Union, TGWU Liverpool BR12 Branch, Dons Smith, Terry Allen (London District Secretary TGWU), Millie Matthews, TGWU Leicester 5/297 Branch, Hammersmith and Fulham Trades Council, Charing Cross Hospital Shop Stewards Committee.

Kornilov's attempted coup had been thwarted, yet the forces backing it – the industrialists, the bourgeois parties and the Allies – were undefeated. The conspirators were kept in reserve for another attempt. Only five arrests were made, and Kornilov placed under merely nominal detention.

For a moment, it seemed as if power might still pass peacefully into the hands of the workers and peasants. In the aftermath of the coup, the Menshevik-SRs, fearing complete compromise in the eyes of the masses, decided not to collaborate any longer with the Kadets. On 1 September Lenin considered offering 'by way of exception' a compromise, to return to the demand for all power to the Soviets and a Menshevik-SR government responsible to the Soviets.

But on the very next day the Menshevik-SRs resolved to support a new cabinet, consisting of Kerensky and members of the Kadet party. Even then, to ensure that all possibilities of a peaceful road were fully exhausted, Lenin continued to entertain the possibility of a compromise for about the first ten days of September.

But in fact the moment had passed. Lenin now realised that the time had come for an armed uprising in Petrograd and Moscow, the seizure of power and the overthrow of the government. The majority of the people were on the side of the Bolsheviks; and the impending surrender of Petrograd to the Germans would make the chances of insurrection 'a hundred times less favourable.' Was Lenin correct?

In the factories, the elections to the factory committees and trade unions showed that the majority of the workers supported the Bolsheviks. Even in the most backward factories, workers who had previously supported the war now swung to the Bolsheviks, sometimes in a very dramatic way: 'a former defence worker mounted the rostrum and with tears in his eyes begged forgiveness from his comrades, promising personally to wring Kerensky's neck. Another appeared with a huge portrait of Kerensky, which he proceeded to tear to shreds before the assembly.'

In the Soviets, during the first week of September, there was a series of resolutions in favour of a government of the Soviets – in Petrograd, Finland, Moscow, and Kiev. Furthermore, the masses were beginning to identify with the Bolsheviks as a party and not merely to support their resolutions. On 9 September the Bolsheviks won their first decisive victory in the Petrograd Soviet; and a Bolshevik, Trotsky, was elected chair.

In the countryside, the number of attacks on landlords' properties rose by one-third compared to August. The conflicts took on a more bitter form – burning manor-houses, cutting down landlords' forests – with soldiers on leave becoming increasingly prominent. The peasants were beginning to realise that they would not be given land by the SRs, they would have to take it for themselves.

The bourgeoisie was considering a surrender of Petrograd, the removal of the government to Moscow and the conclusion of a separate peace. This would enable it to disperse the Soviets and the Constituent Assembly. In bourgeois circles it was common to prefer a victory for the German Emperor rather than for the Bolsheviks; and the intelligentsia contemptuously referred to the Soviets of Deputies.

As their first move, from the beginning of September, the industrialists launched a full-scale offensive against the factory committees, closing down factories and dismissing the workforce. They were encouraged by the Menshevik Minister of Labour's circulars restricting committee meetings to outside work hours and abolishing their right over hiring and firing.

'The bony hand of hunger' grasped the workers by the throat. In August and September workers demonstrated under the slogan 'we are starving' while the bourgeoisie gorged itself unceasingly. The working class was being destroyed physically as the capitalists attempted to starve them into submission.

Lenin was right. These were the most favourable conditions for insurrection: the people were determined to fight, the vacillations in the ranks of the enemies and the half-hearted friends of the revolution were at their greatest. The aim must be to seize power before the forthcoming Soviet Congress to forestall any attempt by the bourgeoisie to disperse the Soviets.

The precise timing of the insurrection should be decided by those in direct contact with the workers and soldiers. In the short term, the Bolsheviks should use the impending Democratic Conference, to make a brief, trenchant declaration and then despatch the entire group of delegates to the factories and the barracks. At the same time the technical preparation for the insurrection must be taken in hand immediately.

Poster honouring the Red Fleet



parations for the Congress of Soviets; it alone will assure that the Constituent Assembly will be convened and carry forth its revolutionary work.'

Lenin knew that the party was letting slip what might be its last chance. His article (22 September) for *Workers Path* on 'Mistakes of the Bolsheviks' argued that 99% of the Bolsheviks should have walked out of the Conference, going directly to the factories and barracks. Instead of bringing the workers to demonstrate outside the Conference, they should have gone to the workers. The editors (including Kamenev, Stalin and Trotsky) printed his article with all these criticisms omitted.

In his next article, bearing the same title, Lenin praised Trotsky for proposing a boycott. This time the editors suppressed the article completely, publishing instead an

'The Citizens of Russia! – Appeal of the Petrograd Military Revolutionary Committee 25 October 1917

The Provisional Government has been deposed. State power has passed into the hands of the organ of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies – the Military Revolutionary Committee, which heads the Petrograd proletariat and the garrison.

The cause for which the people have fought, namely, the immediate offer of a democratic peace, the abolition of landed proprietorship, workers' control over production, and the establishment of Soviet power – this cause has been secured.

Long live the revolution of workers, soldiers and peasants!

article written at the beginning of September, when Lenin had believed that a compromise was still possible. The Central Committee persistently left unanswered Lenin's requests that his policy be considered.

Lenin was now mortally afraid that the Party would have 'beautiful resolutions, but no power'. The Russian Revolution was part of the world revolutionary movement, which had entered a decisive phase, with mutinies in the German fleet (August 1917), and disturbances in almost every European country. If the Bolsheviks did not organise to take power before the Congress of the Soviets it would be 'utter idiocy, or sheer treachery,' and they would be 'miserable traitors' to the revolutionary cause.

He was so incensed by the Central Committee's failure even to consider his position, that he offered to resign, reserving freedom to campaign among the rank and file of the Party and at the party congress.

This was not necessary. Under pressure from below particularly from the Petrograd factory workers, the Central Committee was forced to reconsider its position. On 5 October, with one against (Kamenev), it was decided to stage a walk-out at the opening session of the Pre-Parliament, taking a hesitant step towards insurrection.

The Pre-Parliament opened on 7 October in the grandiose Mariinsky Palace, surroundings calculated to have a soothing effect on weary Mensheviks, such as Sukhanov: 'Amid all this magnificence, one wanted to rest, to forget about labour and struggle, about hunger and war... about the country and the revolution.'

The Bolsheviks did not forget about the revolution: Trotsky denounced the Pre-Parliament, called for all power to the Soviets, and led the Bolsheviks out. But what was their next move?

The decisive push towards insurrection came on 10 October, when Lenin succeeded in convincing a Central Committee meeting that the situation was fully ripe for

Lenin now realised that the time had come for an armed uprising of the government. The majority of the
Patrick Newman concludes the series on the

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the seizure of power.

This time Lenin was opposed only by Kamenev and Zinoviev. They supported a campaign for the strongest possible representation at the Constituent Assembly. They accepted the need for an insurrection, but disagreed about the 'timing', in practice postponing it to the indefinite future. This was because they doubted that the Bolsheviks had the support of the peasantry; they feared that the international proletariat would not support the Russian revolution; and they claimed that the workers were not straining at the leash but apathetic.

To all appearances, their claim had some justification. There were few visible signs of a readiness for action: between August and October in Petrograd only 10% of the workers were involved in strikes; attendance at meetings was sporadic; and factory organisers reported that the general mood was one of lethargy.

But Lenin divined the fundamental aspirations of the masses beneath their shifting moods. The workers were prepared to risk everything – unemployment, starvation, and even death – but were not interested in partial actions such as economic strikes, meetings or demonstrations. Thus workers at the Moscow Dynamo factory reported that they: '... do not want to conduct an economic strike. But for political gains they are unanimously prepared to come out... playing with words destroys all that is left and only irritates the hungry proletarian working class.'

The Congress was only ten days away – the Bolsheviks were now politically prepared, but technically unready.

They were spurred on by their enemies. In the second week of October, the Provisional Government suddenly announced plans to move most of the Petrograd garrison to the front, following the German success in driving the Baltic Fleet into the Finnish Gulf. On 9 October the Menshevik-SRs proposed a special committee to prepare for the defence of Petrograd. The Bolsheviks agreed that a Military Revolutionary Committee (MRC) be set up for this purpose. Its effective leaders – Trotsky and Antonov – were both Bolsheviks. Under the camouflage of preparing for the defence of Petrograd, they could prepare for the insurrection.

The Bolsheviks had more to worry about from their own side than from the opposition. Kamenev and Zinoviev did not limit themselves to a dissenting opinion, they proved themselves to be strike-breakers. They used the 18 October issue of *New Life* (an anti-Bolshevik journal) to attack their own party: '... taking the initiative of an armed insurrection at the given moment with the given correlation of forces independently of and a few days before the Soviet Congress – would be inadmissible and fatal to both the proletariat and the revolution.'

However, the mass of the Bolshevik party worked for, not against, the insurrection. They received an unexpected favour from the Mensheviks, who postponed the Congress for five days, to 25 October. With only six days to go, the MRC began to operate.

The disposition of forces in the approaching battle was as follows. Of the 200,000 soldiers in the garrison, about 10,000 (including 5,000 officer cadets) were decidedly hostile, the vast majority are passively sympathetic. On the side of the insurgents are an estimated 34,000 Red Guards, utterly dedicated but not very well armed. The typical Red Guard was a factory worker, aged under 26, and a Bolshevik.

INSURRECTIONARY DAYS

20 October. The MRC sends out its combat units against a provocative plan



g in Petrograd and Moscow, the seizure of power and the overthrow of the Provisional Government. The people were on the side of the Bolsheviks. The 70th Anniversary of the Russian Revolution.

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ned march by the Cossacks. The march is cancelled. It then directly challenges the Provisional Government: only those directives to the garrison signed by the MRC should be considered valid. The authorities yield without a struggle. In general, they remain passive and make no serious efforts at counter-mobilisation.

22 October The day of the Petrograd Soviet, a celebration of Soviet power. Hear the simplicity and eloquence of the great Bolshevik orators - Lunacharsky, Trotsky, and Volodarsky - in Trotsky's speech: 'The Soviet regime will give everything that is in the country to the poor and to the people in the trenches. You, bourgeois, have two coats - hand over one to the soldier who is cold in the trenches. You have warm boots? Sit at home! the worker needs your boots.'

23 October The Peter-Paul Fortress has to be won over for its well-stocked arsenal and because its cannon overlook the Winter Palace. Antonov is for taking it by force, but Trotsky thinks that the force of words will be enough. He is right - following his speech, the Fortress agrees to accept only the orders of the MRC and to hand over control of the arsenal.

Rather late in the day, an armed guard is put around the Bolshevik political and military HQ - Smolny Institute.

24 October The Government makes its only show of force. At 6am Junkers break up the printing press of *Workers Path*; the cruiser *Aurora* is ordered to leave Petro-

grad. On the command of the MRC, Lithuanian soldiers re-open the printing house; the sailors rise against their officers. It is noticeable how often among the soldiers the national minorities take the lead.

Early in the evening officer cadets attempt to raise the bridges which link central Petrograd with the working class districts and so cut off access to Smolny. They are driven off without casualties by a crowd of armed citizens.

A dozen sailors capture the telegraph office without firing a shot, although there are no Bolsheviks among the 3,000 employees.

During the last week of their regime, the life of the bourgeoisie continues undisturbed. In his matchless description of these days (*Ten Days That Shook The World*) John Reed reports that as well as weekly exhibitions of painting "... hordes of the female intelligentsia went to hear lectures on Art, Literature, and the Easy Philosophies. It was a particularly active season for Theosophists."

A fashion for mysticism is complemented by frenetic attempts to ignore the yawning abyss: 'Gambling clubs functioned hectically from dusk to dawn, with champagne flowing and stakes of twenty thousand roubles. In the centre of the city at night prostitutes in jewels and expensive furs walked up and down, crowded the cafes.'

Events still aren't moving fast enough for Lenin. The MRC must seize the initiative instead of responding to the Government and waiting for the Soviet Congress. Of the Bolshevik leaders, Lenin alone insisted on the necessity of seizing power before the Congress. He hurries to Smolny, against the orders of the Central Committee, as he is supposed to remain in hiding. His intervention is decisive and the insurrection begins within a few hours.

25 October The beginning of an extremely prosaic insurrection, more like a

changing of the guard. There are no barricades, no street fighting, no hand-to-hand clashes, and virtually no casualties.

Between 2am and 7am the key positions are secured. Two of the main railway stations are occupied; the *Aurora* casts anchor in a commanding position on the river Neva, and the sailors ensure control of the remaining bridges; and the telephone exchange is taken over.

At 10am the MRC issues a slightly premature declaration that the Provisional Government has been overthrown. An hour later, Kerensky leaves the capital in a car supplied by the US Embassy in a futile attempt to rally support at the front.

THE FINAL STEP

Yet the final step has not yet been taken: Ministers of the Provisional Government



Top right: Red Guard detachment of Putlov Workers, October 1917. Above: Inside the Winter Palace, troops guard members of the Provisional government on the eve of the Revolution.

have taken refuge in the Winter Palace. The taking of this last refuge of the bourgeois regime is the nearest to an 'heroic' episode in the insurrection. Even so, the seizure of the Palace is a chapter of accidents and blunders - with a more resolute defence it could have been costly.

If the MRC had been fired by Lenin's urgency it could have taken control of the Palace two or three days earlier. Now the MRC compounds its tardiness by an over-complicated plan. Inevitably, detachments are late, instructions are confusing, orders are misunderstood.

In retrospect some of the difficulties are quite comical. *Amie* last minute someone checks the cannon of the Peter-Paul Fortress, which are to fire on the Winter Palace. There are shells for the 6" guns, but the barrels are dirty, so heavy 3" guns are dragged a considerable distance - they might work, only there aren't any shells. On a second check, the 6" guns can be made to work after all.

The signal for the final attack is to be given by a red lantern hoisted to the top of the Fortress flagpole. The only problem is - no-one can find a red lantern. After a long search, one is found but is difficult to make visible.

The palace is defended by a scratch force of about 2000 - a 150 strong women's battalion brought here by a trick as they thought they were coming on parade; a small contingent of war wounded; cossacks from a remote province; and, the largest number, young officer cadets.

No military man can be found to conduct the defence, which is entrusted to a Kadet, the Minister of Public Charities. His own party was not in a very charitable mood, so ignoring his repeated requests for help that he complained: 'What kind of a party is this that can't send us three hundred armed men?' What indeed?

In the bourgeois district next to the Pal-

Declaration of Rights of the Peoples of Russia, 2 November 1917

The October Revolution of workers and peasants began under the common banner of emancipation.

The peasants are emancipated from landowner rule, for there is no landed proprietorship any longer - it has been abolished. The soldiers and sailors are emancipated from the power of autocratic generals, for generals will henceforth be elected and removable. The workers are emancipated from the whims and tyranny of capitalists, for workers' control over factories and mills will henceforth be established. All that is living and viable is emancipated from the hated bondage.

There remain only the peoples of Russia, who have been and are suffering from oppression and arbitrary rules, whose emancipation should be started immediately, and whose liberation should be conducted resolutely and irrevocably.

In the epoch of tsarism the peoples of Russia were systematically incited against one another. The results of this policy are known: massacres and pogroms, on the one

side, and slavery of the peoples, on the other.

There is no return to this infamous policy of incitement. From now on it is to be replaced by a policy of voluntary and sincere alliance of the peoples of Russia.

In the period of imperialism, after the February Revolution, which had given power to the Constitutional-Democrat bourgeoisie, the undisguised policy of incitement ceded place to the policy of cowardly distrust towards the peoples of Russia, the policy of petty excuses for persecution and provocation covered up with utterances about 'freedom' and 'equality' of the peoples. The results of this policy are known: increased national enmity, undermined mutual confidence.

This reprehensible policy of lie and distrust, petty persecution and provocation must be done away with. From now on it shall be replaced by an open and honest policy leading to the complete mutual confidence of the peoples of Russia.

Only this confidence can lead to a sincere and firm alliance of the peoples of Russia.

... it is pleasure as usual. John Reed notices that: '... a few blocks away we could see the trams, the crowds, the lighted shop-windows and the electric signs of the moving-picture shows - life going on as usual.'

While the siege is in progress, the Soviet Congress begins (at 10pm). Of the 670 delegates, 300 are Bolsheviks, and over 100 left SRs (close to the Bolsheviks). Shortly after the proceedings have begun, the Mensheviks and right SRs walk out in protest against the insurrection, showing their contempt for Soviet democracy.

Red Guards and soldiers infiltrate the palace via its numerous entrances. Inside the palace there are numerous inconclu-

sive, but not bloody encounters. Its 'defenders' continually drift away during the evening, while the number of insurgents grows. At 11pm the *Aurora* fires a blank; two hours later it begins a more regular if somewhat desultory bombardment.

It is enough. At 2.10am on 26 October the Palace is taken - power is in the hands of the Soviet Congress. After a week of hard fighting, with 500 killed, the insurrection succeeds in Moscow, the only place in Central and North Russia where the Bolsheviks encounter sustained resistance. The Bolshevik revolution has triumphed - seven decades of Soviet power have begun!

Long Live the Russian Revolution!



Philippines revolution

Putting political power in the hands of the people



Luis Jalandoni is the International Representative of the National Democratic Front. He was a former priest in the Island of Negros and in his work as Social Action Director got involved in the struggles of the sugar workers and peasants. In the course of these mass struggles, he became convinced that radical changes in the Philippines were necessary and joined the Christians for National Liberation, later to become a founding member of the National Democratic Front. After martial law was declared in 1972 he went underground, and after a year was captured and became a political prisoner for a year. After he was released he worked with the industrial workers in Manila but when the strikes started to emerge in 1975 the military hunted him again and he went underground. In 1977 he started work internationally as a representative of the NDF. On 29 August, when in London, Luis Jalandoni spoke to Eddie Abrahams, Trevor Rayne and David Reed. Because of the vital and strategic importance of the Philippines revolution and the central issues the interview raises we have given over three pages of FRFI to it.

FRFI What is the political significance of the 28 August coup attempt, the fifth since Aquino came to power?

LJ The latest coup attempt, the most serious since Aquino took over, shows the growing contradiction within the various elite factions in Philippine society. There is this faction of the militarists in the armed forces in the Philippines which has a long record of human rights violations against the people who wanted to take over power. And there is the Cory Aquino government, which over the last eighteen months, especially over the last eight months, has also accumulated a record of suppression and oppression of the workers and the peasants in the Philippines, while carrying out policies of the International Monetary Fund in favour of foreign multinationals at the expense of the workers and the peasants.

So there are competing elite factions in the ruling class and each one wants to be the ruling faction. And, the Aquino government has laid itself bare to such attacks because of the growing corruption in the government, because of the electoral frauds that were committed in the last elections, and because of the leniency towards the militarists who had started coups before as well as to those who were guilty of numerous violations of human rights. Besides, the Aquino government had been carrying out policies that aggravated the economic crisis.

The Aquino government is likely to de-

clare a state of emergency on the basis of such a coup attempt. This state of emergency has already been proposed by the defence minister Raphael Ileso about twelve days ago. This was used mainly against the left which had started to mount big demonstrations against the Aquino government. So the coup attempt would be used as a justification for more repressive measures. This would be very much along the US design to have tougher measures against the left, which it considers to be the strategic threat to its US military interests and its huge economic interests in the Philippines.

FRFI Would you say that this series of coups has continued to sustain a significant section of support for Aquino in the population who fear this open fascist trend? In connection with that, what do you think is the significance of Aquino's success in the February referendum on the constitution and the May congressional elections?

LJ Well, the series of coup attempts has had the effect of winning more sympathy for President Aquino since the alternative is more fascist and more rabidly anti-left takeover by the military. Therefore it serves to try to increase the popularity of Corason Aquino in the face of intensified economic crisis and mounting popular dissatisfaction with her policies.

The referendum vote was more a vote

against a possible return of military rule, and the election victory, leaving aside the electoral fraud and the attack on the legal left party, was also, you might say, projected as a personal popularity contest for Cory Aquino. So, the series of coup attempts has had the effect of trying to isolate the left and the mounting demonstrations and popular dissatisfaction against Aquino - trying to present her as the better alternative to a return of military rule.

FRFI The people in the section of the military leading the coup, have they any links with landowners and other classes that are clearly trying to make inroads?

LJ The reformed armed forces movement led by Gregorio Honasan is directly linked with the defence minister Enrile and the Grand Alliance for Democracy, which is a political party of landlords and big businessmen. So aside from their own ambitions to have higher positions, they are also linked with a section of the big landlords and big businessmen in the Philippines and, also, with certain sections of the US officialdom. Yes, it's already been exposed that the reformed armed forces movement had links with US officials.

FRFI What's the main social force that supports Aquino?

LJ Well, you might say that with the coming of Aquino there is a new set of big landlords and big businessmen who have pushed out the set that was connected with

Marcos. These big landlords and big businessmen, headed specially by Jose Cojuangco, the brother of Cory Aquino, together now with their support within the military form the basis for the new ruling faction which is the Aquino government. It is also the main implementor of US policies in the Philippines and has become the main repressive force against the Filipino people.

FRFI So the US, though it seemed very reluctant to usher Marcos out, does support Aquino. You say that Aquino implements their policies, and yet the US also backs the other horse as well...

LJ Yes, because the US always has also reserve horses and different scenarios. But for their purposes right now they would see the Aquino government as the main asset that they would have in carrying out their policies. It is also in accord with the low intensity conflict strategy to which the US has shifted after their defeat in Vietnam and the victory of the Nicaraguan people. They have started to shift from unpopular dictatorships to more popular and reformist leaders, at least in image, like Doarte. But it does not mean that it does not secondarily support other forces in the Philippines to which they could shift their support in case of need. Once the principal implementor becomes a liability, as Marcos did become in '85 and '86, then they have other options available. Secondary forces

can always be used to shake down the principal force to grant more wholeheartedly the concessions that the US is demanding. For example in early 1988 there will be the renegotiation on the US bases and they would want an assurance that their bases will remain, even beyond 1991 when the US military bases agreement will expire.

FRFI Can you give us a few examples of the record of accumulated repression which Aquino has been carrying out against the working class and the peasantry?

LJ From 26 February 1986 when Aquino took over up to 1 April this year, the May 1st Movement documented 28 workers killed, 227 wounded, 902 arrested and 7 missing. The workers demanded on 1 May a 50 US cent across the board wage increase after a 3 year wage freeze, with the minimum wage set at just \$2.85 a day. The cost of living is at least twice that much. Aquino rejected this. The workers demanded that anti-labour laws enacted during the Marcos era would be repealed. For example, the National Assembly Act 230 which allows management to bring goods in and out even during a picket or strike. This has been used often by management to bring in scab labour in a van protected by the military. When the workers would stop these vans they would be shot at by the military. President Aquino refused to repeal that decree. At the same time she has

FOUNDER MEMBER OF CHRISTIAN'S FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION WANTED VIOLATIONS IN SANCTUARY

When talking to Luis Jalandoni, we were startled and pleased to hear that Endicio de la Torre, who visited Viraj in sanctuary on 2 July this year was a founder member of the Christians for National Liberation. He spent 9 years in jail under the Marcos regime. In a statement to Viraj he wrote:

'I hope that the struggle, although difficult and long, will result in a victory for justice. We support you and admire your stand, not just in Britain, but in your own country

Commenting on the Tamil liberation struggle, Luis Jalandoni said:

'We support the just struggle of the Tamil people for their self-determination. We support the revolutionaries and progressives who pursue the struggle both inside and outside the country especially those who have been in prison or in exile.'

gone overboard in granting the demands of the International Monetary Fund. The 18 percent increase of prices in the face of widespread suffering of the workers, ignited the massive demonstrations which took place at the end of August.

The peasantry came up with and reform proposals. Four times they tried to see President Aquino who they were refused. On the fourth time they decided to march and then they marched to Malacanang Palace on 22 January 1987. Nineteen of the peasant demonstrators and some workers were killed in a massacre. This was followed by killing of two workers and the wounding of more than 30 in the rice trade zone when the workers there went on a sympathy strike for the peasant demonstrators. And on 10 February, 17 peasants were massacred, including eight children and an eighty year old couple.

The strategic hamleting that is taking place now in the countryside far exceeds the violations of democratic and human rights that were taking place in the Marcos era. In one small village, in two areas there 80 houses were burned in one day in April of this year.

Part of the most recent counter-insurgency measures and in accord with the low intensity conflict strategy was the setting up of vigilante or death squad organisations. And in Davao, as in many other areas, the latest report of the Philippine Alliance for Human Rights indicates that 127 vigilante organisations have been set up throughout the country. The military gave plenty of weapons to anti-social elements, goons and extortionists and they started on a rampage of threatening people especially in the urban poor community where the New People's Army (NPA) was strong before. So they started killing off those whom they suspected to be NPA or supporting the NPA. They would mark with a black X the homes of those whom they said they were targeting for liquidation. They would invite people to a meeting and those who would not come, they would say they were probably sympathetic to the NPA, and they would mark the houses of those people with a white X. So through a lot of intimidation and massive repression to a certain extent they did have some success in disrupting the organisations there and also the work of the NPA in that area. But that was only a temporary development. They were also exposing themselves as the most repressive people and the NPA, that was based in the outlying areas could easily pick them off after when they would visit their family somewhere or they would be going elsewhere - they would be picked off. The vigilante organisations have no roots among the people they are seen as very abusive of the people. So without the support of the people and without being given guns and money by the military they become, after a while, easy targets for the NPA.

FRFI: Who's directing the low intensity conflict and the strategic hamleting? It sounds like the activities we saw in Viet-

nam and Central America

LJ: Ramsay Clarke the former Attorney General of the United States and Ralph McGhee, former CIA agent were in a fact finding team of seven in May in the Philippines and they said it's the Pentagon and the CIA who are directing the low-intensity conflict plan in the Philippines and it's very similar, according to Ralph McGhee to the Phoenix programme which was implemented in Vietnam. Recently the 1 March issue of Newsweek and 9 April issue of Far East Economic Review, together with other papers have exposed the new intelligence finding assigned by Reagan, authorising intensified covert CIA operations in the Philippines. And this would include raising the number of CIA agents from 116 to about 130, authorising overt flights over guerrilla areas, giving computer training and equipment to intelligence war, recruiting intelligence agents planting news stories, setting up new political groups and setting up vigilante or death squad organisations. On 17 February this year the Philadelphia Examiner exposed the fact that ex-Major General John Singlaub, a top CIA operative who was cited by the Tower Commission as working with Colonel Oliver North in channelling arms and funds to the Contras had recruited 37 ex-Vietnam war veterans to conduct counter-insurgency training in the Philippines. So there is an intensified CIA presence in the Philippines and we believe that top US military officials are carrying out this kind of counter-insurgency plan with the help, of course, of the top officials in the armed forces in the Philippines.

FRFI: Can we turn now to the National Democratic Front: its origins and objectives and its strengths today?

LJ: The National Democratic Movement started in the early sixties after the collapse of the work of the old Communist Party and the revival of the anti-imperialist anti-fascist anti-feudal struggles in the Philippines. This was partly given impetus by the struggles in Vietnam. From 1961 up to 1972 various national democratic organisations of youth, of workers and others developed, and in 1964 the Patriotic Youth was set up and launched a lot of demonstrations against the local regime, but also especially against US war aggression in Vietnam.

"... there is a growing consensus that the Aquino government is right wing..."

Then in 1968 the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) was re-established by young Marxist elements and in 1969 the New People's Army was founded. Up to 1972 there were many demonstrations and new, national democratic organisations developed. After martial law from these organisations the National Democratic Front was set up. On 24 April 1973 the NDF proclaimed its 10 point political programme as a basis for unity for all organisations and individuals who would fight for national liberation against the Marcos dictatorship backed by US imperialism. From 1973 to 1976 the NDF had very difficult years under fascist repression. Many were killed, arrested, tortured, but the work in the cities and in the rural areas continued and started to grow steadily from 1977 to 1980. From 1981 to 1985 it grew quite rapidly. Now there are 14 underground organisations in the NDF. It includes the Communist Party of the Philippines, the New People's Army, the Christians for National Liberation, the Revolutionary Congress of Trade Unions composed of workers in the factories, and the Federation of Workers Associations, composed mainly of workers in the urban poor communities who are underemployed or recently unemployed. The biggest organisation is that of the Revolutionary Peasant Movement with about 800,000 members. Then you have the Patriotic Youth, the Nationalist Health Association for health workers, the Nationalist Teachers Association for teachers and school personnel, the Lawyers' Organisation and you also

have the Science and Technologists Organisations. A very strong organisation is the Women's Organisation and then there is still the minorities organisation in the north, that is the Cordillera Peoples Democratic Front.

Our work has developed in the rural areas where mass organisations have been built, as well as alternative programmes of health care, literacy, land reform programmes, co-operatives and organs of political power. This would now be covering more than 10,000 villages out of over 41,000 so almost 25% of the villages are covered by this rural work.

Together with this of course is the strengthening of the New Peoples Army which has set up guerrilla fronts in more than 60 out of 73 provinces. Then in the cities there is the work of the open mass movement and this would be basically among workers, the urban poor, students and then the professional organisations.

There is an underground component and a legal component. They are able to mount big demonstrations and since 1985 what they call People's strikes for 4 or 5 days when you have the paralysis of transport, boycotts of schools, closing down of factories, barricades in the streets. This can be done in Manila and in 4 or 5 other big cities. The overall strength of this movement would be around 10 million people. Actual members would be about one million but about 9 million more participating a little less than 20 per cent of the population.

FRFI: What effect did Aquino coming to power have on your organisation? Did you have any defections? Any sections that actually wanted to give the government a chance?

LJ: There was a lot of discussion and divergence of views. There were those who said that the liberal democratic elements in the government seemed to be relatively strong and would be able to carry the anti-fascist momentum further. But there were others who said that essentially government power was in the hands of basically reactionary elements. For about 6-8 months this difficulty remained, but after the January massacre at Malacanang there is a growing consensus that the Aquino government is right wing and has become the main implementer of US policies representing the new set of ruling landlords and big businessmen.

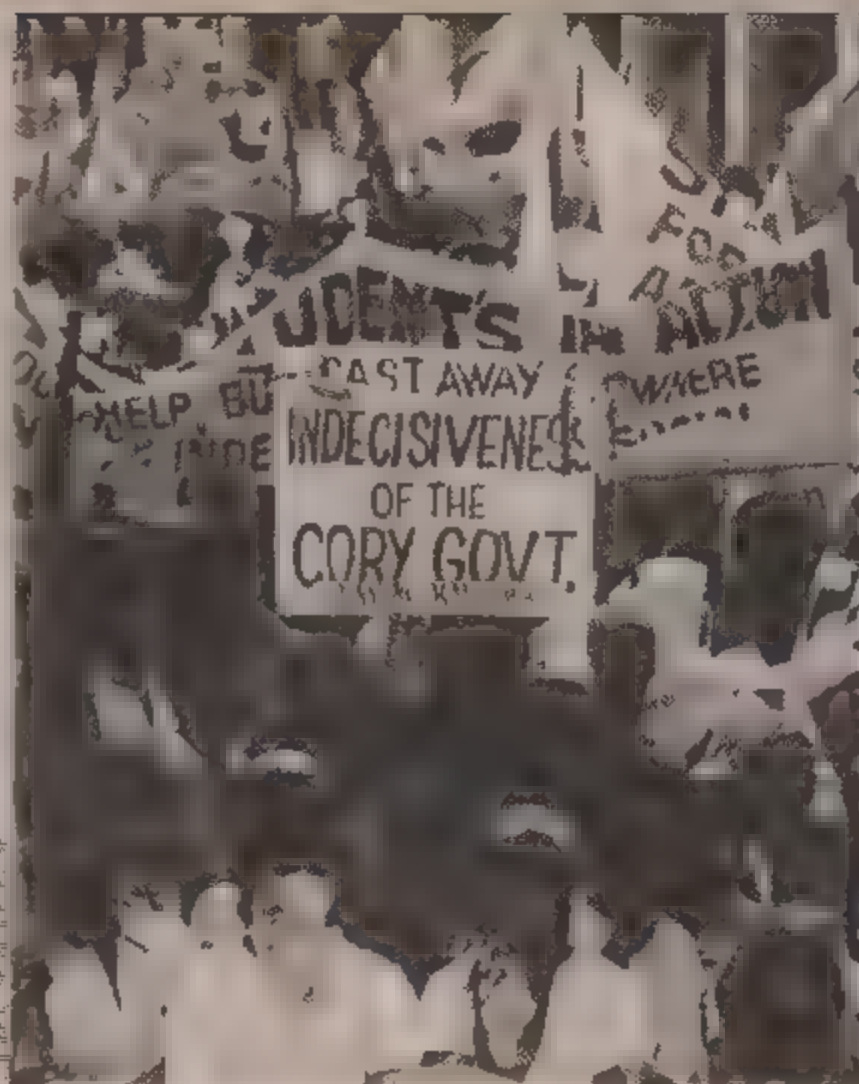
Another effect of Aquino's popularity was a lowering of the extent of the armed struggle. The targets had to be carefully selected because of the political implications. But after February when Aquino declared total war on the Filipino people and asked the armed forces of the Philippines to resume full scale military operations, the military tactical offensive of the New Peoples Army has increased very much.

FRFI: What is the attitude of the NDF to military struggle and participation in parliamentary and local elections?

LJ: There is a strong unity now that the armed struggle is the main form of struggle needed in order to achieve political power for the people. But this armed struggle of course has to be combined with many forms of unarmed struggle. First of all the armed struggle in the rural areas has been the main form of struggle. And then the people with its firm support. Besides the armed struggle there is the mass movement which plays a very big role in complementing the armed struggle and this mass movement has both an open and underground character.

Now about work in the parliamentary arena. It is seen in relation to the armed struggle and the mass movement, as a supplement, in the sense that it should be utilised but its role is subordinate to the armed struggle and the mass movement. It should not be neglected but neither should it be overestimated in its role. So, a limited participation in the parliamentary arena in order to help advance the armed struggle and the mass movement has to be given attention but not to be overestimated and not to the detriment of the armed struggle and the mass movement.

FRFI: In this connection could you say something about the relationship between



Above: a mass rally. Below: Philippine Government and NDF representatives at the peace negotiations



the NDF and the Peoples Party led by Jose Sison which participated in the elections.

LJ: The NDF is an underground, illegal organisation. The Peoples Party was a legal political party to represent the left and the middle in trying to breach the monopoly of the elite in the parliamentary arena. You might say that organisationally and politically they are autonomous. The Peoples Party has its own organisational and political integrity. And therefore the Peoples Party has its own decision making processes, but of course it has been accused of being a front of the Communist Party of the NDF. The Peoples Party is the first attempt of the left to enter the parliamentary arena since 1946.

The electoral process was heavily in

favour of the elite political parties. Just to register as a senator or candidate you had to pay 200,000 pesos that would be \$10,000. There was an estimate made by an independent research body into how much it would cost to run a reasonable campaign - the estimate was 12 million pesos \$600,000. As a matter of fact the seven candidates of the Peoples Party had only a fraction of that for all of them. But besides that when they started campaigning, 29 of their campaigners were killed, 3 were beheaded just outside Manila. Two headquarters were burned, 50 arrested, so they were subjected to very concerted, repressive measures. In addition the armed forces of the Philippines conducted

continued page 1

Murder of Bayan leader

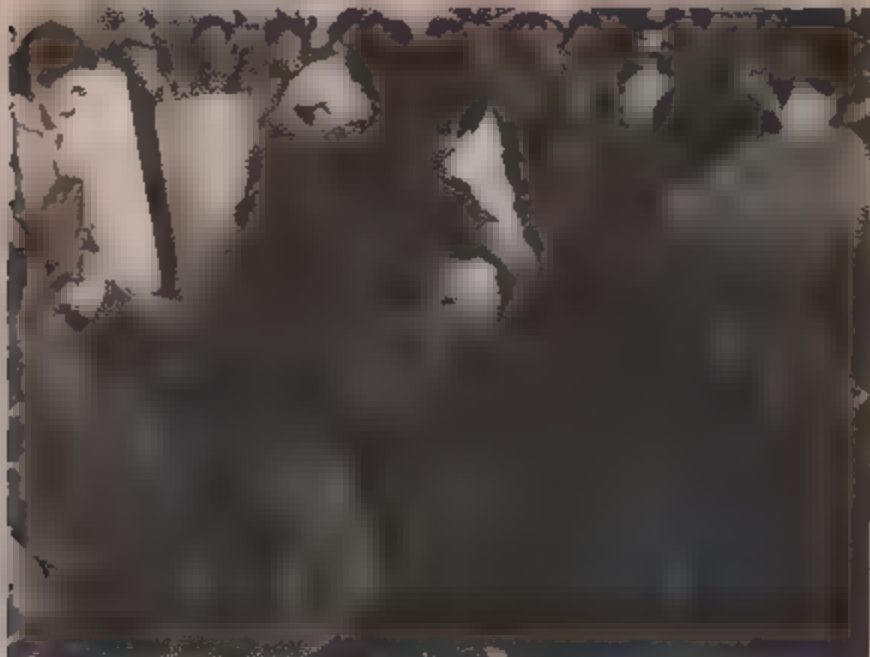
The defeat of the 28 August coup by military factions loyal to Aquino by no means signified defeat of counter-revolution. Indeed the latest coup attempt has only pushed Aquino further into line with the fascist military. In sacking her executive secretary Joker Arroyo and her speech writer Teodoro Locsin, she was bowing, willingly, to the military's view that even bourgeois moderates were now an obstacle to dealing with the revolutionary democratic opposition. The sackings were welcomed not only by the army, but by the business and finance community as well.

Aquino, far from taking any decisive action against the coup leaders, has watched passively as they have openly organised themselves as an independent force. Large factions of the 'loyal' army are indeed collaborating with the rebels in operations against the NPA. Pressure is now mounting to get rid of

Chief of Staff Fidel Ramos regarded as an ineffective opponent of the NPA. The military and the 'rebels' want to eliminate the democratic openings created by the February 1986 peoples power movement and destroy the communist led revolutionary forces.

Counter-revolution is now mobilising with all the means of terror available to it. On Saturday 19 September they murdered Leandro Alajandro, General Secretary of Bayan (New Patriotic Alliance) a coalition of left wing movements in the Philippines. The left responded by holding a 10,000 strong demonstration in Manila on Monday 21 September. Many left wing cadres and leaders are now going underground in preparation for decisive confrontations. Somewhere the NPA is stepping up operations against the Philippine army which has suffered a number of severe blows from them.

NDF INTERVIEW



Mendiola massacre 22 January 1987



military operations in bailiwicks of the left. For example in Negros, the Island where I come from, they bombed two hill v areas where the left was strong. Two thousand people had to flee. This was just three weeks before the elections. When they arrived they went to the schools in the area because they had no place to stay. They were housed there by the military, they were not allowed to go out and all of these things. In effect they were disenfranchised. Not only that, they could not think of voting since they were looking for medicines and food that they needed. This happened in different areas. But finally 695 cities and towns or more than 40 per cent of the total, were declared 'critical areas' by the commission on elections which allowed the military to come in officially to the electoral process. They could transfer the voting precincts from one place to another. The counting of the votes would be in municipal halls surrounded by the military. So, with the use of all this, the Peoples Party and its affiliates who were uping to get 15-20% of the seats got zero in the senatorial slate and only 3 in the congressional elections out of 200. So, this kind of massive attack against the left party. There were some positive aspects in the sense that in terms of mass education the issues on land reform, on the US bases and nuclear weapons, the International Monetary Fund policies, these were brought out and discussed. But in terms of electoral success, it was a big electoral defeat and that now has to be taken into account for the plans for 9 November local elections.

RFI The NDF is a people's organisation composed of different class interests obviously representing the poor and the oppressed of the Philippines. What objectives do you have? What kind of government of the Philippines do you wish to create? What kind of social system do you aim to create?

LJ Well, the first objective is to put the political power in the hands of the people, a people's coalition government, which would represent different classes, sectors, organisations, groups and individuals who have resolutely fought for genuine democracy and independence. This would be in the main through elections.

There would be genuine land reform but would benefit about 70 per cent of the total population together with increasing the capacity of the peasants to produce, especially setting up co-operatives. There would have to be also a national industrialisation programme to go with the land reform to develop the resources of the country but definitely in the hands of the Filipino people and their organisations and erasing the undue privileges of the foreign.

There would be a

200 safety faults and incurred a lot of corruption about \$100 million went to Marcos to give the bid to Westinghouse. Well that should be cancelled. So a relatively big portion of the debt should be cancelled on the basis that this was incurred through corruption and very clearly against the people's interests. On the others, we will examine them and try to renegotiate better terms. Then we would have a limit on the percentage of export earnings that would be used to service the debt. The Aquino government shelled out 83.2% of export earnings from 1 January to 30 September 1986 to service the debt. That's an impossible amount. Now no government can have any kind of chance for economic recovery. So we would have to set a reasonable limit. This could be 10 per cent, 15 per cent. So the massive debt would be what we would probably call a selective repayment and a selective repudiation on the basis of examination.

RFI You belong to the Christian section of the movement. What is your attitude to capitalism as a system? Do you see a mixed economy of some kind continuing once the people have seized power?

LJ I believe that the great majority of the organisations and the individuals in the movement reject a capitalist road of development. The workers would not want to fight and die for a system that would still basically be exploitative of them. The peasants would want for something more. So there is a very strong socialist perspective. But of course, as you say, there are various classes represented in the movement and you have some who still believe that some kind of capitalism might be viable in the future. They would have to struggle it out. But I think the stronger current wants socialism. It will go through a long process but it will be democratically decided. I would say that a strong section of the National Democratic Front, the biggest organisations would be ready to reject a capitalist type of development and its perspective would be for a socialist type in accord with Filipino values.

RFI Does the NDF have a publicly stated policy in relation to the anti-imperialist struggle in other parts of the world, in South Africa, in Palestine, in Ireland, in Central America?

LJ The NDF takes the position that there are our main stream, that we see the anti-imperialist struggle. There is the stream of the national liberation movements, there is the stream also of the socialist countries, the stream of what we consider anti-imperialist independent countries and the revolutionary and progressive movements in the capitalist countries. The Filipino people's struggle is an integral part of this overall anti-imperialist struggle especially since it is fighting against US imperialist domination in a very significant area in South East Asia and the Pacific and that US bases there and other interests there play a strategic role in the regional and global military strategy of the US. The advances in other anti-imperialist struggles are a contribution to our own struggle, whereas our own advances and victories also help to weaken the common

RFI What kind of time perspective have you got for seizing power? Do you actually see developments now beginning to move once again in your favour?

LJ Well definitely we believe that after about 18 years of struggle we have a basis for further advances. However most of the leadership in the NDF are reluctant to give a time scale because there are so many factors. Will the US come in in a big way to defend its military and economic interests? If it comes in in a big way it will prolong the struggle and raise the social cost tremendously. It could easily delay things for 5, 6 or 7 years. If we do our work well in the united front and don't make big mistakes it could hasten, but if we make some very big mistakes it could delay. So, there are so many factors that we prefer to speak of important tasks. The US is becoming very quick in shifting from one scenario to another and you have a much more complicated Aquino government to deal with. The fact also that we are an archipelago makes it very difficult for international support. Besides we also have problems with international relations connected with

our own limitations in the past as well as the PKP's [the old and now reactionary communist party. Ed.] historical contacts with various anti-imperialist forces abroad.

We would say that having organs of political power and a guerrilla people's army covering more than 10,000 villages in 60 provinces and the participation of about 10 million people that it will be very hard for the US as well as the local reactionary factions to crush us. There are many favourable factors. Among this is the intensified and even violent conflicts among the various factions in the ruling classes. We have to bring out the positive factors, and the negative factors and the difficulties and the tasks rather than to give a time frame because the giving of a time frame is rather risky in the sense that there are so many indeterminate and unforeseen factors that could come in. That's why the time frame (we have fought for 18 years) is to sharpen our capacities of analysis, our knowledge of theory to face the various complicated tasks that are there.

RFI You yourself described your Christian background and we'd like to know what role the church is playing in the Philippines.

LJ Well the official institutional church has been predominantly on the side of the ruling classes. This has been historical. The institutional church, those in the hierarchy and especially the conservatives holding key positions and taking over key positions now are supporting Aquino and would be very much against the left. For

and the progressive organisations, from the progressive church organisations abroad. So that would mean the right wing of the Philippines would be linking up with right wing elements abroad to try to cut off international support. We make a distinction of the rank and file clergy - that's a different thing. The Christians for National Liberation have a membership of several thousands, about half of the church sector personnel. The rank and file clergy are experiencing more the problems and the struggles of the oppressed sectors in the population and have more sympathy. And some of them have organisationally come into the Front and the organisation expression is the Christians for National Liberation.

RFI And they're illegal, they're an underground organisation?

LJ Oh yes, illegal. Many of our members have been killed or arrested or tortured. Endacio de la Torre, one of our founders, has been nine years in prison in two stages and some have been killed. And some have joined the New Peoples Army as guerrillas. So there is a big distinction between those holders of power in the church and the rank and file.

RFI What about the role of British imperialism in the Philippines? It is the largest of the European investors in the Philippines.

LJ Well, given that Britain is an important backer of US policies throughout the world but also in our part of the world, it has provided some military hardware, like scorpion tanks to the unreformed armed



New People's Army cadres being trained

example, in January of this year Cardinal Sin said that if the rebels don't come down from the hills and support the democratic process then the church would support violence against the rebels. Of course he was severely criticised by progressive groups. Then the Catholic Bishops Conference issued a statement saying priests and nuns and the faithful should not support any organisation that advocates violence and class struggle, which was really directed against the CPP and the NDF. But when the vigilante organisations started to emerge the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines said nothing. In fact some individual bishops openly endorsed the vigilante organisations saying it's the constitutional right of every citizen to protect himself. So you can see that the Church plays a reactionary role in Philippine politics, in terms of the institutional church.

Of course there are exceptions, there are some individual bishops who are sympathetic to the people's organisations and their struggles in varying degrees. But as an institution as a whole it would be very afraid of revolution, against the CPP and the NDF. Right now the bulk of them would be supporting Aquino and they will be using their influence now, even internationally to cut off support for the NDF.

forces of the Philippines. Now I've heard that there is a British MP who just came from the Philippines that wants to propose that military training will be given by the British armed forces to the armed forces in the Philippines. And then also that British banks also play an important role besides other multinationals there. That the solidarity of the British people, their organisations would be quite important in opposing this, trying to weaken and isolate the US imperialist policies and strategy and develop the strongest forms of cooperation which would be mutually beneficial with the people's organisations both underground and legal in the Philippines. I think it would be mutually beneficial and it would also be helpful to the overall anti-imperialist struggles throughout the world. I hope this dialogue and the contacts with the organisation and your paper will be helpful in developing such mutually beneficial relations.

'Fight Racism? Fight Imperialism' would like to thank the Philippines Support Group for their help in arranging the interview and for providing the photographs. All those interested in building solidarity with the Philippines revolution can contact the Philippines Support Group at 1/2 Grangeway, Kilburn, London NW6 2BW.

Irish prisoners relatives speak out

'But we're a younger nation - we won't take anything that's dished out'

On 19 September some of the relatives of Irish POWs imprisoned in England visited Britain to speak at an IBRG Conference on Repatriation of Irish prisoners. They spoke movingly about the struggle of Irish prisoners and their families and attacked the discrimination which has led to the prisoners being consistently refused transfer to jails in the Six Counties. There are 55 Irish POWs in jails in England. Political prisoners, they are effectively hostages of British Imperialism.

FRFI interviewed two of the relatives at the Conference, Geraldine Bailey and Sheila McDonnell. Geraldine Bailey's husband Tommy Quigley is serving 35 years. Sheila McDonnell's husband Gerry is serving life. We are proud to publish the following interview.

What forms of harassment have the British government used against you?

Geraldine Bailey It was in 1983, Tommy, my husband was on remand. I was on my way home after a visit. In Victoria station a man came up behind me and said 'Geraldine Bailey, I arrest you under the PTA'. I got into Paddington Green Police Station and they started going through all my suitcases. Two women police officers said 'Right we want to strip search you'. That morning I had started my period and I had no time to get any sanitary protection so I had just rolled up some toilet paper. So when I undressed down to my pants I said to them, 'look I've got my period and I've got this bit of toilet roll', and the policewoman said, 'Take it off'. I said 'What, you want the toilet roll?', which was stained. She unwrapped it and searched it. So I was actually standing with nothing for my period. Then they went through my hair, my ears, my skin. Then I had to go and see the doctor and I had to strip again. He put his instruments up my nose, in my ears, my mouth and then he told me to get up on the couch and be examined my back passage. He did it roughly.

After this I was taken to a toilet. But it was all open, except for a low partition and the policewoman was standing beside me. It was off a main corridor and two policemen came wandering by while I was going to the toilet, which shocked me. Then they released me after two days. It was pure harassment, just to frighten me.

Tommy is in jail in England. What extra pressures does this cause?

Geraldine You have all the hassle with the Brew (Social Security), getting money for visits. Some of them act as if it was coming out of their own pockets, others are alright. You have to wait three or four hours every time you go there. You always end up borrowing money because if you're bringing children with you you

have to constantly feed them. The Brew pay you just to go by boat and train. Originally they wanted us to go by Larne-Stranraer, and then to the Isle of Wight, which is a 19 hour journey. But we fought them and now can go via Liverpool.

Especially when you have the kids when you come you're worried that you might be held again under the PTA and the kids taken into care. Before I come on a visit I always say to mine, if anybody tries to take me away, hold on to me tight and scream. Thank God it has not happened yet, but it's a fear that's always there.

The children see Tommy once a year. All they know of their daddy is that they see him once a year and he writes them letters. How can you have a daddy that you see once a year? I could afford this year to come and stay for a fortnight and take my visits in a block. That cost me £750, his family and mine helped with that. But you can't expect that every year. We're only ordinary working class, the majority of my family's unemployed. So this year was just a once in a lifetime. It would be so much better if the men were serving their sentences in the North. I could bring the children up once a month to see him and then I could see him every week, that would be a 50p bus ride.

While he's in jail it's me and the kids that are going through it. The whole thing of making ends meet. When I get my brew money every week, a certain amount has to be taken out to save for the visits. It's not too bad when I visit on my own, I do without lunch. But with the children, they want this and they want that.

I don't know why the British government won't let them serve their sentences in the North, I suppose it would boil down to being a political reason. Before this, I wasn't involved in politics. I was just a housewife. Then suddenly this has hit me. As time goes by I can see there's a lot more in the world that I didn't understand but do now. Now when I hear crimes have happened, say in England, and they say we got this confession, now I ask if it is true.



Sheila McDonnell



Geraldine Bailey

They can actually lift people and throw them in jail for nothing.

Sheila, in your speech to the Conference today you said you thought that pressure was mounting. Can you see any signs of a change in the government's position?

Sheila McDonnell Some things have given us a little hope. But we are not relying on the recent letters from the Home Office. For us the men are home when we can visit them in Long Kesh. We will fight to bring the lads home. But we don't let anybody give us any false impressions that they will be home in six months or a year.

What are visiting conditions like?

Sheila In Wakefield, it's called the breakers yard. All Irish prisoners, Category A, are sent there and they can spend up to two years in solitary confinement. The most recent case is Hugh Docherty and Nat Vella. They were down there 8-9 months on protest. Their protest was about the visiting conditions. They were just kept in solitary all the time. Mrs Vella went to see her husband and they were separated by two five foot tables. She had to sit at the end. Her children were allowed to sit by her husband but she was not allowed to. Now if there's anything intimate she wants to discuss with her husband, the screws would say to her 'Can you talk up we can't hear'. So when she went all they could say to each other was 'How are you?', 'What was the flight like?' At the beginning of the visit they let her embrace her husband and at the end, that's it. If his mother goes she could sit beside him, anybody could, except her. The punishment is with his wife. So he said to his wife 'It's pointless this, us two sitting like this, forget about visiting.' Because she hadn't been visiting one of her children asked her 'Is he dead, my father?' She said no. He asked 'Well how come we don't go to see him any more?' She told him it's because of the punishment that's happening. The case was brought to our Repatriation Committee and we came over and held a demonstration in Whitehall and handed a letter of protest in to the Prime Minister, asking that they be taken out of Wakefield. And Jeremy Corbyn got different MPs to visit the jail.

Why won't the British government grant repatriation?

Sheila It's just political discrimination, nothing more. It's to deal out more hardship. It's not just in the last 15 years that this hardship has been dealt out to the Irish

nation. It has been dealt out for hundreds of years. They still feel they're the masters of us and think we're the kind of people who will just take anything that's dished out. But we're a younger nation, we won't take anything that's dished out to us. It is a political decision to keep the prisoners here. But when they were returning 47 members of the security forces (convicted of offences in the Six Counties and sent back to England to serve their sentences) there was no obstacles put in their way. They didn't have to sign demands that they would denounce violence or denounce what they had done. No it's just a case of 'what's good for us British and to hell with any other nation.' Whether it be Irish, black, Asian, whatever it may be it's just 'we dish it out and you have to take it'.

What is happening on the repatriation issue in the Six Counties?

Sheila We have this Repatriation Committee, it's for the whole 32 Counties. The four of us that are here today are the younger generation. People may ask where are the elderly folk. They're not able to travel because of health reasons. So we have come, we're doing the fighting for them. As far as they are concerned they may never see their sons' faces again. We have told them we're a new committee and we will fight. They're coming home, they're not staying in English jails, no matter how long it takes. So we owe it not only to the prisoners but also to the elderly people. We owe it most of all to the children so there's family life given to them.

What should people here in Britain be doing?

Geraldine We want people in England to build up support to bring them back home. We're not asking for them to be released. The majority of our prisoners are life or recommended sentences. All we're asking is for them to be able to serve their sentences back home. Just to be near.

Sheila We would like unity from all groups. Instead of one group fighting and pushing their own aims all the time, we find with campaigns back home that it's better to have complete broad platform. That everybody who is fighting on the campaign is fighting for repatriation and it's not for them to bog the aim of their own party. We'd like them to take genuinely to heart that repatriation should be brought in immediately to alleviate the pressure on the relatives. And that they stay on that platform and with them all together the repatriation issue is winnable. The lads can be brought home as long as we have all the groups united on it and they

don't take the old British line of divide and conquer.

Broadwater Farm is less than a mile away. Have you any message for the black community?

Sheila I don't think it's a recent thing that there's discrimination against black people. It's not recent as far as Britain is concerned because they went into those countries, like Africa and India and took the wealth off them. Yet whenever people from those nations came to work here it was, 'You accept the crumbs.' I would say to them, unity is the most important thing every time. Don't let the black community be divided. Britain has this thing divide and conquer. But if you can keep the unity you can conquer everything. And education, that's a most important thing. Britain does not like an educated people.

IN MEMORIAM

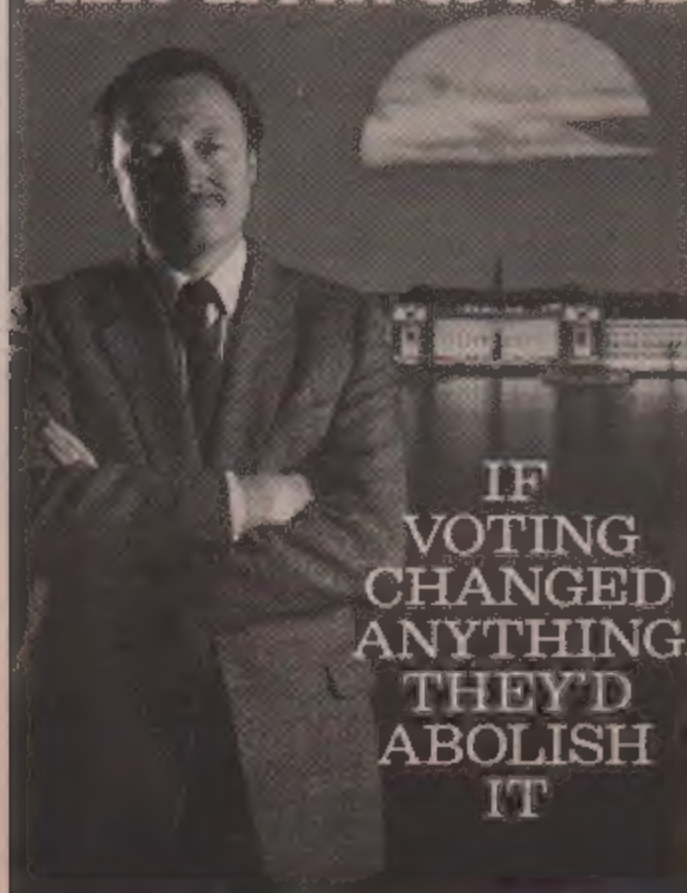
IRA Volunteer Ray Mac Lochlainn died on Monday 9 September 1985. He spent ten years in British prisons from 1974 to 1984. Throughout his life, inside and outside prison, he was a Republican fighter, a socialist and an internationalist. Communists, Republicans and thousands of prisoners in Britain will always remember him.

Jim Reilly, Luton Sinn Féin and Home Counties Organiser for Sinn Féin (Britain), died on Friday 26 September 1980. Right up to the moment of his death, Jim Reilly continued his lifelong struggle as a revolutionary Republican to free Ireland from British rule. For this he earned the hatred of British Imperialism which bounded him to his death.

The Revolutionary Communist Group and Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! salute the courage and dedication of comrades Ray MacLochlainn and Jim Reilly.

The Dandelion Effect

KEN LIVINGSTONE



If Voting Changed Anything, They'd Abolish It, Ken Livingstone, Collins, 367pp, hbk £12.00.

Ken Livingstone is a survivor. His book, *If Voting Changed Anything, They'd Abolish It*, is his account of the first 21 years of his political career, from 'one of the few recorded instances of a rat climbing on board a sinking ship' when he first joined the Labour Party at the age of 23, to the abolition of the GLC and his election as MP for Brent East in 1987. As a whole the book is heavy-going. It does however, for the determined reader, give a clear insight into the machinations of Labour Left politics and Livingstone's own philosophy which is in part a search for metropolitan utopia, but even more a real love of power politics.

In 1969, when, according to Livingstone, most other radical youth were abandoning the Labour Party for more radical alternatives, Livingstone recognised that 'activities on the streets were unlikely on their own to change a Western democracy unless the central machine was on the point of collapse'. Those who wanted change, says Livingstone, 'could not ignore the traditional parties of the left which gave us access to the levers of power'. He joined the Labour Party.

In the early years, Livingstone was at his best fighting the old right wing Labour councillors who had for years wheeled and dealt 'Chicago-style' to maintain power. One of Livingstone's first observations, apart from the smallness of Labour Party meetings, was that the Tory-controlled Lambeth Council had a more progressive housing policy than any of its Labour predecessors. Livingstone glories in exposing these reactionaries. In 1976, several career moves on, he was selected as Labour candidate for Hampstead to the considerable chagrin of sections of the well-heeled local Labour Party. One of them wrote a letter to the Labour Party NEC asking for them to overturn

Livingstone's selection.

'His education is sketchy. I understand he went to a College of Education, and we all know how low the standard is at some such places which I think I would describe as schools for nannies. This is a great pity when one thinks that there were in the running for candidature two PhDs, a QC and several other graduates of reputable universities such as Oxford... the attached article of mine shows the disastrous result we had in both 1974 General Elections when we had a postman as candidate... If the NEC refuse endorsement... we would then have to reselect and there might be a chance of a leftwing candidate who is not a fool being chosen, though perhaps that is over optimistic.'

Only hours after the count in the 1979 General Election, which was an inevitable defeat for Livingstone in Hampstead and the Labour Party nationally, Livingstone was plotting in a committee room in Kilburn to take over the GLC in two years time. Livingstone was now in his element: for two years he lobbied and schemed with fellow Labour Left members to ensure his own election as GLC leader hours after Labour had gained a majority. By his own account he was very perspicacious. He knew that a tide of rejection of Wilson-Callaghan style politics would grow. New social forces were at work in London with the exodus of skilled workers, leaving the poor, unskilled and unemployed as a large proportion of London's population. Women were becoming 'a major economic factor' and lesbians and gay men found 'a home of relative safety'. In this climate the Labour right could not hope to survive.

At this point Livingstone treats us to his own, no doubt accurate, political philosophy:

'As my constantly shifting political relationship with Ted Knight and various leftwing factions reveals, it is the pressures of political and economic forces which determine the alliances that are

made between politicians, not whether or not they like each other. I have often thought that Mario Puzo's *The Godfather* is a much more honest account of how politicians operate than any of the self-justifying spewed out in political biographies and repeated in academic textbooks. One sentence in that book typifies the way most politicians deal with each other. Tessio, the longest-serving of the Corleone mob, has switched his allegiance and betrayed the family by setting up Michael Corleone for assassination. His treachery is uncovered, he is led away to his death, and as he goes he sends Michael Corleone a final message "Tell Mike it was only business," he says: "I always liked him". Fortunately for politicians, if not the general public, politics are conducted by ballots rather than bullets in most of the United Kingdom.'

More on this later. First we must hear an account of the early months of Labour administration at County Hall from the ditching of the Leader's chauffeur-driven limousine and the ceremonial robes, to turning down the invitation to the Royal Wedding, the first few months were euphoric. A new style open-door policy was introduced: democracy was the order of the day; the porters were delighted to be told to carry on calling him 'Ken', although senior officers 'continued to stride into my office booming out "Good Morning leader" as though we were at a Nuremberg rally'. It reads like the first days of Soviet power—absent of course were first of all the Soviet and secondly people's power.

Across the river in Westminster the real corridors of power were controlled by the recently-elected Thatcher government which had set its sights on restoring the privileges of its own constituency. Demolishing the GLC's attempts to introduce radical policies like lower fares became part of the Tory campaign to destroy the credibility of the Labour Left. Livingstone glories in the twists and turns of the fight, but he also gives a powerful account of the hounding by the Tory press and the malicious stories which were published on a daily basis by the *Daily Mail* who assigned a top reporter to shadow him everywhere. What is absent is any real attempt to explain the shift of political momentum within the Labour Party which must have been the background to most of the GLC years. Livingstone carefully obliterates any mention of the change from the halcyon days of 1981 Bennite radicalism to the share-owning democracy of 1987 touted by Kinnock and Gould. But then Livingstone is a survivor.

By 1986 South Bank socialism was in tatters. The Tories had successfully passed the Abolition Bill to do away with the GLC and it only required the rate-capping debacle to make every GLC Festival feel like a funeral. This is when Godfather politics comes into play, and indeed 'if ballots were bullets', Livingstone's path would be strewn with corpses. Who knows if the detailed account of the bitter split with John McDonnell, Ted Knight and the hard left over rate-capping is true? What does it matter? Livingstone, the survivor, emerged relatively unscathed as a newly-fledged MP having lodged his personal savings with a friend. Others were not so lucky. Left councillors in Lambeth are still paying back thousands to the Exchequer for making a stand. 'Tell them it was only business', Livingstone always liked them.

Livingstone's final chapter, 'The Dandelion Effect', takes little account of the hardship which now faces working class people as Thatcher carves up the corpse of local government. He hopes that the dandelion seeds of socialism, in the form of redundant GLC employees who have scattered as far afield as Denmark, Spain and Australia, will slowly take root. As for himself, he has moved on to fresh pastures in Whitehall where he is no doubt planning for two years' time.

Carol Brickley

Join the RCG

The Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign forced this year's Labour Party Conference to discuss a motion to defend Viraj in sanctuary. The motion was passed unanimously. It is precisely because the VMDC has not limited its work to the confines of the labour movement but mobilised the support of the forces outside, that it has been able to influence that movement and push onto its agenda the defence of black people fighting deportation.

The same is true of the City of London Anti-Apartheid Group. Through its work on the streets building support for the Non-Stop Picket it has broken away from the rotten tradition of limiting anti-apartheid work to the electoral interests of the Labour Party. By its standards of political work it has forced the better sections of the movement to make a real and effective stand against British collaboration with apartheid.

As the labour movement, followed by the British left, moves to the right in response to Thatcherism, the VMDC and City AA by their success have proved that it is possible to fight back. Their principled stand in defence of the oppressed, their open and democratic method of working, their refusal to restrict their work to the confines of the labour movement has, by mobilising the forces fighting outside it, attracted the support of the best in that movement.

In order to resist the tide of reaction following Thatcher's third election victory and the rightward shift of the Labour Party, communists today must work amongst the forces that are fighting back. The RCG alone has been able to explain why the labour movement cannot resist Thatcher. The Labour Party is the political voice of the labour aristocracy, it represents the narrow interests and prejudices of the privileged layers of the working class. The ability of the left to resist Kinnockism is paralysed by the fact that the left bases itself on the same constituency as Kinnock himself, the upper layers of the working class and the middle class.

Our constituency is those not represented by that movement: low paid workers, the unemployed, young people, black people, women, the forces with no ties to imperialist exploitation of the oppressed. Through the VMDC and City AA we are taking the first small steps towards building a new movement.

To succeed we must be able to extend our experience and influence to other campaigns and struggles for democratic rights, jobs, living standards, against racism and oppression.

In this we are today limited by our small size and resources. We are restricted in our work by our financial difficulties. Over the recent years middle class and better off supporters have tended to move away from the RCG. This process is likely to accelerate with Thatcher's third term and Labour's move to the right. This has led to the withdrawal of financial support. Increasingly our support is being built amongst those who have nothing—young, unemployed people who by necessity are fighting back and taking the side of the oppressed.

The limitations on the RCG's size and financial resources force us to make difficult decisions. In March this year the RCG PC decided to plan for a fortnightly newspaper. We have since, after serious discussion, reconsidered the correctness of that decision. To put what would be substantial finances and resources into producing a fortnightly newspaper would today obstruct us in carrying out the essential task of building our organisation and extending our influence to campaigns on all the issues facing the working class. This is why it would be wrong to produce a fortnightly newspaper now. Our immediate priority is to build our organisation, recruit new members and win new supporters from the forces we are working with. To achieve this we are appealing to all readers and supporters of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* to contribute to our £10,000 Fund Drive. We need to dramatically increase our financial income. Already we have been forced to put FRFI up to 40p to cover increased production costs.

The potential for our newspaper and organisation is enormous. In the last month we have achieved remark-



able sales of FRFI on the streets in working class areas. At a street meeting in Peckham to build support for the March for Mayekiso we sold 400 copies of FRFI in Islington 180 and Dalston 200, all in a few hours. Putting our resources into colleges at the beginning of term has achieved FRFI societies in colleges across the country. Our comrades and supporters in Lancaster have established a vibrant anti-apartheid society in St. Martins college which is mobilising to bring two coach loads of people to the March for Mayekiso.

This month our members are attending the Socialist Conference in Chesterfield to argue for all genuine socialists in the Labour Party to join with the oppressed. We are also building for public meetings to expose the fraudulent Indo-Sri Lanka peace agreement and build the defence of sanctuary for Viraj Mendis. This month the RCG will be marching twice against apartheid: on 10 October with City AA for Moses Mayekiso and again on 24 October on the AAM march for sanctions. We will also be building for the VMDC AGM on 17 October.

We believe that this work is politically the best employment of our resources to build the anti-racist anti-imperialist movement. We want you to join us in making it possible. Support the £10,000 fund drive, sell our newspaper, join us in our work.

Lorna Reid

We need £10,000 now!

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★ JOIN THE RCG ★

- Take the side of all those struggling against imperialism—Join the RCG!
- A movement must be built in Britain in solidarity with the struggling peoples of Ireland, South Africa, Palestine, Central America. Help us to do this—Join the RCG!
- A movement must be built here in Britain which stands with the oppressed fighting racism, repression and poverty. Help us build this movement—Join the RCG!
- A movement must be built which challenges and defeats the treachery of the opportunist leaders of Britain's Labour and trade union movement—Join the RCG!

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NICARAGUA AND THE CONTRAS



Dear Comrades

The peace treaty signed on 7 August by the five Central American heads of state formalises the strategic defeat of the US-backed Contra terrorists in Nicaragua - the biggest defeat imperialism has suffered at the hands of the working masses since Vietnam. Yet to read the articles by Andy Price and Trevor Rayne in the August and September *FRFI*, it's hard to believe they're talking about the same document.

1. According to Andy, Reagan is trying to sabotage the treaty, 'which would effectively force the Sandinistas into negotiations with the Contras'. Not so, Reagan tried to sabotage it because it did not call for such negotiations. If it had done, the Sandinistas would never have signed. (The full text of the treaty is in the 13 August issue of *Barricada Internacional*).

2. Trevor says, 'the Contras understand that their position will never be lost while their Commander-in-Chief occupies the White House'. This reflects a failure to understand that the Contras' position, such as it is, has never rested solely or even mainly on their own efforts, which have had no military effect however much aid Reagan and Congress have given them. It has rested above all on Reagan's demand that the Sandinistas negotiate with them - a demand quietly set aside by Reagan since 7 August - which contained the ever-present danger that Reagan might send in the Marines before his term was up.

He can hardly go from a signed peace treaty back to diplomatic stalemate and then to invasion in 16 months.

The Contras know all this. The treaty has accelerated the already quite steady trickle of Contras laying down their arms. Those who still persist in fighting for Yankee interests will likely have their grisly talents transferred to the services of some US puppet regime in the area; probably El Salvador, whose death squads already contain quite a few Contras.

3. It's amazing that Trevor manages several references to El Salvador without mentioning the growing US military intervention in support of the Duarte regime; yet this is guaranteed to escalate further as the treaty forbids outside aid only to rebels, not to governments, and even most of the members of Congress who've always voted against aiding the Contras, support aid to Duarte.

For its part, the FMLN will clearly fight on. It can't fail to be encouraged by a treaty whose sole major effect is to put a US invasion of Nicaragua out of reach, and the imperialists are well aware of this. The focus of the regional struggle has shifted, along with the danger of direct US intervention, from Nicaragua to El Salvador. The need to understand this is especially great in this country, whose rulers are the main accomplices of US state terror in both countries. Comradely greetings.

Mike Webber
Bucks

Mike Webber's letter allows me to clear up any confusion among our readers. Andy Price (*FRFI* 70) and myself (*FRFI* 71) were not talking about the same document. Andy referred to Arias' proposals prior to the programme worked out on 7 August. We went in press a week before then. Such are the pitfalls of a monthly paper. Yes, the Contras depend entirely upon the US, and for that reason they still hope to ride to power on the back of a US invasion. On El Salvador I note that Duarte is beginning talks with the FMLN/FDR in October; we would ask you and all our readers to step up support for the Central American revolution, send us reports of solidarity actions and of the unfolding struggle in that part of the world.

Trevor Rayne

LETTERS

FRFI welcomes letters from readers. Please send them to *FRFI* BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX

WHEN THE VIOLINS STOPPED PLAYING

Dear Friends

We were very interested to see Annie's review in your paper this month. I was there at that World Romany Congress in Göttingen when the document that became the book *When the Violins Stopped Playing* was handed over to Alexander Ramati. That book was really written by a Polish gypsy named Roman Mirga, although I notice Annie swapped it to Mirga with her lifelong training in changing gypsy names: she subconsciously even changes one that wishes to be known world wide. A gypsy should have only three names or so. One he gives the Man, one for his friends and his own secret name for himself and close family (not in regular use).

Well, I reviewed the book in most countries when it first came in 1985, as a matter of fact, but I do like this review. I don't know why Annie never mentioned the tribe name of the Polish gypsies ('Vasani') whom the story is mainly about as she does know it, as I have told her myself, and she is related to them. But you will have noticed that the book as well as the review of it, mentions every tribe by name except the one Mirga wants advertised.

Well, it's in the book, so Annie had no choice but to follow. However, I must say the Lowari tribe should be spelt Lovori though Gypsy language was never written till recently. There is an even better book called *The Crossing*, of the same story from a different angle written by a boy mentioned in this book. Anyone interested in our story should read it. Many of you may have seen a film on TV called 'Escape from Sobibor'. Well, you don't know, do you, that every entry in that film, for instance in the mass crowd scene of people running to safety, was a gypsy, but they never got a mention in the film.

That World Congress was filled with 300 delegates from 28 countries

including Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal, who addressed the conference; Gratton Puzon, the Association of Persecuted Peoples and many more. Famous or not, all these people were calling for the end of prejudice and were supported by statements of Jews and sympathising Christians. Not one representative of the German government, not even of a provincial government, was present at the Congress. Mirga was right, it had to be published in America. Be lucky

Tony
PS While there is no memorial in Auschwitz concentration camp, recently gypsies put one in Belsen which translates: 'In deep sadness and with profound respect we, Simi, remember the victims our people. Through their violent death they exhort the living to resist the injustices committed by man against man'.

GORBACHEV AND SOCIAL REFORM



Dear *FRFI*

The world socialist system is at present going through the stages of a dramatic change. Mikhail Gorbachev's initiation of the processes of glasnost (openness - or democratisation) and perestroika (restructuring) are having a profound effect on the Soviet Union and all the socialist world. These processes of change are of fundamental importance for the renovation and modernisation

of socialism, and should be taken seriously by communists and socialists everywhere.

The readership of *FRFI* would hardly know that such developments have been and are taking place. They would gain a greater understanding of these processes reading the quality daily newspapers. Indeed the recent article on glasnost in *FRFI* 70 is the first attempt to analyse and understand changes which have been developing now for three years. However, instead of attacking the Trotskyist left for failing to give greater insights into glasnost, *FRFI* should quickly reflect on its own record.

The article entitled 'USSR: what is glasnost' tries to be 'objective' but sides with the old conservative bureaucracies because Gorbachev hasn't done things the Cuban way. In fact I do not know whether *FRFI* is for or against glasnost. But we do know that *FRFI* approves of the Cuban example of the rejuvenation of socialism (see *FRFI* 63). Patrick Newman in trying to be consistent with the previous article concludes with the following: 'Can the problems facing the Soviet Union be analysed in abstraction from the current stages of the struggle against imperialism... and further... Gorbachev's approach is noticeably different from that of Fidel Castro, which sets the problems of Cuba firmly in the context of the international struggle against imperialism.' In the 'Political Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 27th Party Congress' this in fact is exactly what Gorbachev does! Secondly Patrick Newman's arguments fail to grasp the context of glasnost or the fact that the whole socialist world is undergoing a process of dramatic change. Each socialist nation will have different prerequisites for their own versions of glasnost. The methods needed for increasing democratisation of society, fighting bureaucracy and corruption, raising economic productivity cannot take the same course in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Cuba and Vietnam.

Differences of demography, levels of industrialisation, different histories of their respective revolutions and the arenas in which they confront imperialism make Patrick Newman's assertions erroneous. In reality they represent *FRFI*'s disapproval of what is taking place in the socialist world, and especially the Soviet Union.

Looking back to *FRFI* 63 we learn that: 'Currently both China and the Soviet Union are embarked upon a series of reforms aimed at accelerating the rate of economic development using market mechanisms. Is this really true?' Yet again the writer equates two completely different processes which are occurring, on the one hand, in the Soviet Union, and the other, in China; to enhance his own image of the Cuban Revolution.

The policies of the Chinese Communist Party have led to the establishment of stock markets, unemployment and other capitalist practices to the complete detriment of the central plan, in fact the slogan 'be rich is glorious!' is part of the Chinese communist way of thinking. To equate these anti-socialist concepts with Gorbachev's policies is clearly a major misunderstanding. One of the main premises of Gorbachev's thinking is the strengthening of socialism through a powerful and modern economy. Given China's imperialist foreign policy since the mid-1970s, where China has supported UNITA in Angola, the genocidal Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea, and its attack against Vietnam in 1979 its reactionary role in the world is apparent for all. Such comparisons are counter-productive to a Marxist understanding.

It is also a pity that the first article on glasnost should take a review format. Instead of putting forward a theory - what has been happening in the Soviet Union, the reader received a whole series of snippets of information with comment. For example the reader does not get any sense that arms reduction and the opposition to Star Wars, are intimately bound up with possibilities for modernising the Soviet economy, not by just releasing economic resources from military research for use elsewhere, but also that Gorbachev will have a greater chance in defeating the military bureaucracies in the political arena. The fortunes of Gorbachev's policies are indeed bound up with the stresses that imperialism can bring to bear.

Now that a start has been made I only hope that *FRFI* will continue to cover in a more committed fashion the political economy of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.

Yours

Dale Evans
London

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VIRAJ MENDIS DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

PUBLIC MEETING

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NO PEACE
FOR VIRAJ MENDIS

THURSDAY 22 OCTOBER

SPEAKERS INVITED:

- Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
- Keith Yaz MP
- Jeremy Corbyn MP
- Trevor Rayne (RCG)
- VMDC

Venue: Islington Central Library, Fieldway Crescent, London N7. Nearest tube Highbury & Islington

ALSO: Hackney Street Meeting

SATURDAY 17 OCTOBER

Corner of Mare Street and Morning Lane, assemble 12 noon

VMDC CONFERENCE

CHURCH OF THE ANGELMAN MANCHESTER

Religious support for
Viraj Mendis

FOR DETAILS WRITE TO:
VMDC c/o North Hulme Centre
Jackson Crescent
Manchester M15 5AL

FIGHT RACISM FIGHT IMPERIALISM

LIVERPOOL

PUBLIC MEETING:
Sri Lanka: the
struggle continues

WEDNESDAY 28 OCTOBER
7.30pm, AEU HALL,
Mount Pleasant, Liverpool

FIGHT RACISM FIGHT IMPERIALISM

MANCHESTER

PUBLIC MEETING:
'Sri Lanka - the
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27 October

Speakers invited:
● TREVOR RAYNE
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VIRAJ MENDIS MUST STAY!
DEPORTATIONS NO WAY!

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Consensus and conflict in the
struggle for the future South
Africa.

Guest speaker: Baruch Hirson
with panel: David Kitson, Carol
Brickley and David Reed

Friday 16 October
8pm

Camden Town Hall,
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Manifesto of the Revolutionary
Communist Group
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- 11 October - The crisis of
British imperialism Andy Pacey
- 18 October - South Africa
and British imperialism Richard
Roques
- 25 October - Ireland and
British imperialism Ann
Burrows
- 1 November - The
revolutionary struggle of black
people Ken Hughes

FIGHT RACISM FIGHT IMPERIALISM

LONDON

LAUNCH OF FORUMS
ON IRELAND

A nation that oppresses
another can never itself be
free: Ireland, the key to the
British revolution

7pm Wednesday
21 October
FRIENDS MEETING HOUSE
Euston Road NW1
(opp Euston Station)

Speaker

DAVID REED

Author of *Ireland: the key to
the British revolution*
Admission 50p

City AA Public Meeting

VIVA NON STOP PICKETING

Introduction to City AA
and its campaigns
Sunday 25 October
2pm
Marchmont Centre
Marchmont Street, WC1
(nearest tube Russell Square)

JOIN THE

VIRAJ MENDIS ★ DEFENCE CAMPAIGN

There are VMDC Support Groups in:

● LONDON ● GLASGOW ●
LEEDS ● LIVERPOOL ● TYNE
AND WEAR ● BRIGHTON ●
DUNDEE ● BRISTOL ●
EDINBURGH ● BRADFORD
● CAMBRIDGE

Join one of these groups! If there isn't one in your town help set one up! WRITE TO MANCHESTER VMDC FOR INFORMATION AND ADVICE:

c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Hulme, Manchester M15 5AL Tel: (061) 234 3168

LONDON SUPPORT GROUP

On Sunday 6 September, London VMDC support group joined the Hackney Anti-Deportation Campaign (HADC) Day of Action and marched from Southall to Harmondsworth detention centre. VMDC and RCG supporters led the noisy chanting. Detainees came out to the yard to greet us. We threw VMDC pamphlets and copies of FRFI over the fence to them. The London Support Group meets every Thursday at Camden Town Hall, Bedford Square at 7.30pm. For more information contact: VMDC London Support Group, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX.

SPLENDID SOLIDARITY

In a splendid display of solidarity with the VMDC, the Newham Monitoring Project sent the campaign a cheque for £300. They say: 'We at the Newham Monitoring Project are totally committed to the principled stance you have taken in demanding our right, absolutely, to remain in this country...'

DR ROBERT BRADNOCK DEFENDS VIRAJ

30 people attended a VMDC fringe meeting held on 16 September at the Liberal Party conference. It was addressed by Father John Methuen, the VMDC and Dr Robert Bradnock - Chair of the Liberal Party Foreign Affairs Panel. In a written statement to the VMDC, Dr Bradnock said:

'On my recent visit to Sri Lanka I met leading politicians from all parties and academics and journalists. I am convinced that while it may not be possible to say that Viraj would certainly be killed, there is every possibility that this would happen. It would be in my view grossly wrong to return him to Sri Lanka as long as there is any reasonable doubt as to his safety. At the moment no guarantees can be made, and no British government should take the decision to return him to that fate.'

GLASGOW VMDC SUPPORT GROUP JOINS IRISH SOLIDARITY MARCH

In September, Glasgow VMDC support group mobilised a strong VMDC contingent on a demonstration in solidarity with the struggle in Ireland organised by the Republican Bands Alliance. A message from the VMDC was enthusiastically received by the crowd.

The Glasgow VMDC support group meets fortnightly at the Asian Action Committee offices. Come along and build the fight for Viraj Mendis. For more information contact VMDC, Box 10, 340 West Princes Street, Glasgow.

Labour Party supports Viraj

The VMDC achieved a great victory at the Labour Party conference when along with its Labour Party supporters it won unanimous backing for an emergency resolution which stated:

'This conference notes that the Home Office on 26 August made a statement to the effect that it was considering overturning its initial pledge regarding the sanctuary where Viraj Mendis has been protected for 272 days, in order to arrest him and deport him to Sri Lanka where he faces execution.'

'Conference also notes that the NEC has supported the right of Viraj Mendis to stay in this country and therefore the conference asks the General Secretary to immediately contact the Home Office urging it to show compassion in this case and not to reverse its previous pledge regarding Viraj's sanctuary. Conference also endorses the NEC decision supporting Viraj's right to live in this country.'

It took a hard fight to ensure that the Standing Orders Committee (SOC) scheduled the resolution. On Monday 28 September, 70 people packed the VMDC fringe meeting addressed by Keith Vaz, Jeremy Corbyn and others. In addition there was a strong contingent of Black Section members angry that the issue of racism was

not on the conference agenda. When it was revealed that the SOC was refusing to put the emergency resolution to the conference, it was decided to picket the SOC. On Tuesday, 30 people turned up - VMDC, RCG, Black Section members, as well as Tony Benn, Eric Heffer, Les Heckfield and others. In the afternoon two VMDC members managed to enter the conference and interrupted Kinnock's speech to remind the delegates of Viraj Mendis's struggle. Thereafter, every day, VMDC members and supporters hammered at the SOC doors until they won. During the campaign, some stewards exposed their vile racism. Black Sections member Kuumba Balogun was greeted by SOC stewards with remarks such as 'Here comes dreadlocks who wants to get in' and 'ethnic minorities get so irate.'

Besides help from Black Sections members, the VMDC got support from numerous other delegates, MPs and ordinary Labour Party members. The VMDC will now be launching a major drive to mobilise all Labour Party branches behind the campaign.

Home Office ruse foiled

In FRFI 71 we wrote that following the 27 July Judicial Review decision: 'With High Court "legal" backing and the false hopes of peace in Sri Lanka, the Home Office is working to isolate the campaign from its mass support, and particularly from the Church - a bastion of Viraj's sanctuary'.

So confident was the Home Office that it immediately declared it was reconsidering its pledge not to raid the sanctuary and arrest Viraj. The VMDC responded by producing a special dossier to counter the lies with which the Home Office planned to split the unity the VMDC has built with the local working class community, political, anti-racist and religious organisations as well as prominent public personalities. As a result organisations, Bishops, MPs, trade union leaders and others have endorsed the dossier and foiled Home Office tactics.

But the VMDC's most important work has been to continue consolidating its support among the local working class community. Its regular Friday marches from the City centre to the Church of the Ascension continue to grow. In the biggest demonstration so far, on 2 October, over 100 people marched in support of the VMDC, with Direct Action Movement contingents from Sheffield, Doncaster, Bradford, Huddersfield, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester. For the first time also the RCP attended the demonstration. On 24 September a new VMDC band led the

march which was joined by many local organisations as well as a contingent of FRFI and AAM supporters from Lancaster. In another significant and welcome development, the local Socialist Workers Party have supported the march during the past month and on 18 September, for the first time, brought along their banner.

On 17 October, the VMDC will be holding its Annual General Meeting to take stock of the 10-month sanctuary campaign and discuss the current political situation in Sri Lanka and the anti-deportation movement in Britain. The RCG will be proposing a wide range of activities, designed particularly to build support within the local community. Such support will be critical when Viraj's appeal against the Judicial Review decision is heard later this year.

FACADE OF PEACE CRACKS IN SRI LANKA

It has taken less than two months for the facade of peace in Sri Lanka to crack. Arimthalingam Thileeban, a leading Tamil Tiger, fasted to death amidst scenes of general uprisings; Indian troops fired on both Tamil and Sinhalese crowds; Sinhalese police and Indian troops have exchanged fire. The Guardian reports that the daily killing of politicians and activists in the south continues, and Amnesty International points out that 'The accord has not so far been ratified by the Sri Lankan parliament', and concludes that it is not 'safe' for Tamils to return to Sri Lanka.

TREVOR RAYNE

Central to the Agreement is the shared interest of the Indian and Sri Lankan governments in defeating the Tamil national liberation struggle. This means neutralising the leadership of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and preventing the unification of the eastern and northern Tamil areas (see FRFI 71). Since 29 July the Tamil people have faced a two pronged attack.

Throughout August the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) of the Indian Intelligence Agency directed Telo, Plote, Eprif and Tri-Star, small Tamil groups, against the Tigers and their supporters. Some 30 Tiger fighters were killed. At the same time 10,000 Sinhalese were settled in Tamil areas. This is the quickest rate of colonisation since independence in 1948. Significantly, much of the colonisation has been near the strategic port of Trincomalee.

Only three of the sixty four new Sri Lankan army camps in Tamil areas have been removed. Sinhalese police and mercenaries have continued to intimidate Tamil communities. None of this has been reported in the British press, which has reproduced Indian government press statements blaming the Tigers for Tamil deaths. These allegations are repudiated by the Tigers.

With the mass support of the Tamil people, Thileeban commenced his fast to death, without food or water, on 15 August. He put five demands to the Indian government:

- that they disarm the auxiliary groups
- remove Sri Lankan police camps
- disband the Sri Lankan army camps
- end colonisation

Above right: Thileeban who died after 265 hours on a total thirst and hunger strike. Below: Indian troops with arrested Tamil Tigers



- and release the 3,000 Tamil prisoners still held in the south.

After 265 hours Thileeban died on 27 September. His sacrifice was a measure of the iron will of the Tamil people. Thousands of people joined Thileeban with token hunger strikes across the Tamil areas; tens of thousands of people besieged all the Indian army camps; government offices were ransacked; police stations occupied and their officers put to flight. Velupillai Prabhakaran, Tiger leader, spelled it out: the protests would not be called off until their grievances were redressed.

The Indian government got the message, and assured the Tigers that they would have seven of the twelve places on

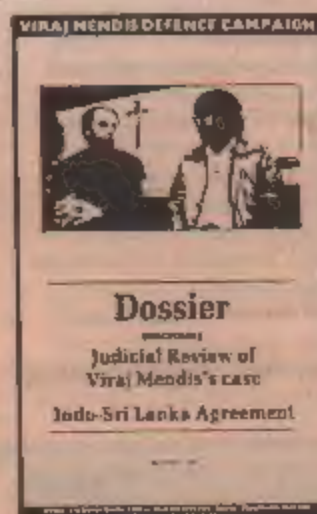


Above right: Thileeban who died after 265 hours on a total thirst and hunger strike. Below: Indian troops with arrested Tamil Tigers



the Interim Administration. This has inflamed Sinhalese chauvinism. On 1 October Sri Lankan police and armed thugs opened fire on Tamil people and set fire to their homes in the Trincomalee area. Rampaging Sinhalese mobs then attacked a patrol of Indian troops. These soldiers then fired on the mobs, killing two Sinhalese. This was followed by the arrival of Sri Lankan armed police on the scene, who in turn opened fire on the Indian troops, who retaliated in kind, and then arrested the police unit.

The determination of Tamil liberation struggle, personified by Comrade Thileeban, threatens to explode the peace accord and all the oppressive social forces that would destroy the Tigers.



The VMDC dossier and a statement calling on the Home Office to abide by its pledge not to raid the sanctuary and to lift the deportation order against Viraj Mendis has been endorsed by scores of MPs, Church people, trade union leaders, anti-racist and other organisations. Among the signatories are:

- Bishops of: Kilmalee of Man/Jarrow/Kingston/Knaresborough/Plymouth/Southampton/Reverend Harry Potter/Reverend John Bremner
- MPs: Sid Blissett/Dennis Canavan/Bob Clay/Harry Cohen/Jeremy Corbyn/Stan Crowther/Andrew Faulds/Eric Heffer/Simon Hughes/Ken Livingstone/Eddie Lloyd/Alan Meale/Bob Parry/Joan Ruddock/Dennis Skinner/Andrew Smith/Pat Wall
- MEPs: Barbara Castle/Glynn Ford/Les Huckfield
- Revolutionary Communist Group
- Carol Brickley - Convenor City AA
- David Reed - Editor FRFI
- Harry Conroy - General Secretary of the National Union of Journalists/Terry O'Halloran - Secretary London Freelance Branch NUJ
- Punjabi Welfare Association
- Gordon McLennan - General Secretary Communist Party of Great Britain
- Merseyside CND
- Campaign Against Racism and Fascism
- Kingston Constituency Labour Party
- NGA Liverpool branch

The dossier is available from VMDC, c/o North Hulme Centre, Jackson Crescent, Hulme, Manchester M15 5AL. It costs £1 or 25p (unwaged). Help us sell and distribute the dossier. Write in for your requests now.